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Regionalism and Peacebuilding in West Africa:
Addressing the Challenge of Roaming Combatants

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REGIONALISM AND PEACEBUILDING IN WEST AFRICA:
ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGE OF ROAMING COMBATANTS

Summary

This thesis provides insights into approaches to regional peacebuilding with reference to the Mano Union River region of West Africa, comprising Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea. Using the case of the interrelated conflicts in these countries, particularly of regional fighters that fought in two or more countries, it investigates the constraints of conventional peacebuilding theory and practice in addressing regional conflict.

Drawing largely on a constructivist International Relations approach, it argues that state-centred perspectives of conflict and peacebuilding, undertaken by institutions made rigid by ritualised practice, preclude an understanding of cross-border conflicts as localised conflicts, within the framing of a micro-region, and also block their effective engagement with the narratives articulated by combatants about their motivations for participating in cross-border conflict. Fieldwork was largely undertaken in Liberia, with the analysis supported by in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with regional combatants of Sierra Leonean, Liberian and Ivoirian descent, based in Liberia, as well as an institutional ethnography of United Nations peace operations, drawing on participant-observation, interviews and documentary analysis.

The thesis demonstrates that while economic motivations feature prominently in regional combatants' motivations, they also subscribe to other motives, in part mediated by socially constructed regional identities. These motives, however, receive limited or misguided attention from peacebuilding institutions, resulting in responses that are, in turn, limited in scope and effectiveness. A key lesson is the importance of understanding the opportunities and challenges arising from localised yet transnational imperatives that translate into violent cross-border movements in marginal border areas, to ensure adequate responses and sustain peace in the region in the long term.

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List of Acronyms

ADDR	<i>Autorité pour le Désarmement, la Démobilisation et la Réintégration des Ex-Combattants</i> (DDR Authority)
AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
AFP	Agencies, Funds and Programmes (UN)
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
APC	All People's Congress
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
ATU	Anti-terrorist Unit
AU	African Union
AU PSC	African Union Peace and Security Council
BIN	Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization
CDF	Civilian Defence Forces
CEI	Independent Electoral Commission
CFAF	Franc CFA / <i>Franc Communauté financière d'Afrique</i>
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CSC	County Security Council
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DDRR	Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration and Repatriation
DFS	Department of Field Support
DPA	Department of Political Affairs
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
ECOFORCE	ECOWAS Peace Force for Côte d'Ivoire
ECOMIL	ECOWAS Mission in Liberia
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECPF	ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework

EO	Executive Outcomes
ERU	Emergency Response Unit
FACI	Armed Forces of Côte d'Ivoire / <i>Forces armées de Côte d'Ivoire</i>
FAFN	Armed Forces of New Forces / <i>Forces armées des forces nouvelles</i>
FANCI	National Armed Forces of Côte d'Ivoire / <i>Forces armées nationales de Côte d'Ivoire</i>
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FLGO	Liberation Forces of the Far West / <i>Forces de Liberation du Grand Ouest</i>
FN	New Forces / <i>Forces nouvelles</i>
FNCI	New Forces of Côte d'Ivoire / <i>Forces nouvelles de Côte d'Ivoire</i>
FPI	Ivoirian Popular Front / <i>Front populaire Ivoirien</i>
FRCI	Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire / <i>Forces républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire</i>
GGAA	Grand Gedeh Association in the Americas
HIPPO	High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IE	Institutional Ethnography
IMC	Inter-Mission Cooperation
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
INPFL	Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia
IOT	Integrated Operations Team
IPE	International Political Economy
IR	International Relations
ITF	Integrated Task Force
JBSCBU	Joint Border Security and Confidence Building Unit
JCCEM	Joint Council of Chiefs and Elders Meeting
JMAC	Joint Mission Analysis Centre
JTF	Joint Taskforce

LDF	Lofa Defense Force
LIS	Liberia Immigration Service
LNP	Liberia National Police
LPC	Liberia Peace Council
LRRRC	Liberian Refugee, Repatriation and Resettlement Commission
LUDF	Liberians United for Defence Force
LURD	Liberians Reunited for Reconciliation and Democracy
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MILOB	Military Observer
MINUCI	United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MJP	Movement for Justice and Peace / <i>Mouvement pour la justice et la paix</i>
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
MPIGO	The Ivoirian Popular Movement of the Great West / <i>Mouvement populaire ivoirien du Grand Ouest</i>
MRU	Mano River Union
NCDDRR	National Commission on Demilitarization, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NPRC	National Provisional Ruling Council
NRA	New Regionalisms Approach
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NSA	National Security Agency
OMA	Office of Military Affairs
OP MAYO	Operation MAYO
OROLSI	Office of the Rule of Law and Security Institutions
OSRSG	Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General
PBF	Peacebuilding Fund
PDCI	Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (African Democratic Rally) / <i>Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire</i>

PET	Policy Evaluation and Training Division
PRC	People's Redemption Council
RBB	Results-based budgeting
RDR	Rally of the Republicans / <i>Rassemblement des Républicains</i>
RIMCSU	Regional and Inter-Mission Cooperation Support Unit
RPG	Rocket Propelled Grenade
RRR	Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reintegration
RSC	Regional Security Complex
RSCT	Regional Security Complex Theory
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
S/Res	Security Council Resolution
SAS	Special Air Services
SLA	Sierra Leone Army
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
SMC	Standing Mediation Committee
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary-General
SSR	Security Sector Reform
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Council
TCCs	Troop-Contributing Countries
TWP	True Whig Party
ULIMO	United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy
UN	United Nations
UNAMID	United Nations–African Union Mission in Darfur
UNAMSIL	UN Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone
UNCT	UN Country Team
UNDDR	UN Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (The UN Refugee Agency)
UNIOSIL	United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone
UNIPSIL	United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone

UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNOCI	United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire
UNOMIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia
UNOMSIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone
UNOWA	United Nations Office for West Africa
UNOWAS	United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel
UNSOA	United Nations Support Office for the African Union Mission in Somalia
UNSOM	UN Assistance Mission in Somalia
UNTFHS	UN Trustfund for Human Security
UNTSO	United Nations Truce Supervision Organization
USG	Under-Secretary-General
WANEP	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding

Administrative Map of the Mano River Union



Source: Mano River Union Secretariat

1. Introduction: regional insecurity and peacebuilding in the Mano River Union

1.1. *Background and aims*

This thesis aims to contribute to the body of literature on regional conflict and peacebuilding, focusing on the interrelated conflicts in the Mano River Union¹ (MRU) sub-region of West Africa, comprising Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire. Sierra Leone and Liberia became notorious in the 1990s and early 2000s as a result of the brutality that characterised their protracted conflicts, the interconnectedness of their civil wars, and the significant regional and international efforts to end the crises. As the two countries' wars waned, Liberia's neighbour Côte d'Ivoire fell into civil conflict, with Liberians and Sierra Leoneans fighting for the various sides. This thesis investigates the effectiveness of peacebuilding approaches in addressing the regional aspects of these countries' conflicts. It does this particularly in the context of (ex-) combatants willing to cross borders to fight as evidenced, most recently, by the participation of up to 4,500 Liberian former combatants in the post-electoral violence experienced by Côte d'Ivoire from 2010–2011 (Group of Experts on Côte d'Ivoire 2011c: 14). It thus examines the efficacy of regional peacebuilding efforts in relation to such movements, and the implications of the same for long-term peace and security in the sub-region.

This thesis traces back to 2006 when I joined a team conducting a survey on ex-combatant reintegration in Liberia for the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), similar to a research project undertaken by Humphreys and Weinstein in Sierra Leone in 2003 and captured in the paper, 'What the Fighters Say: A Survey of Ex-Combatants

¹ The Mano River Union (MRU) is an intergovernmental institution established in 1973 between Liberia and Sierra Leone, with Guinea joining in 1980. It is named after the Mano River, which originates in Guinea and forms a border between Liberia and Sierra Leone. Following a hiatus because of civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia, MRU was reactivated in 2004, with Côte d'Ivoire joining in April 2008. While the goal of the Union remains fostering economic cooperation among the countries, one of its priority goals is the coordination of 'peacebuilding as the prerequisite to any development' (MRU n.d.).

in Sierra Leone' (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004). Amos, our key informant in Montserrado County, where the capital Monrovia is situated, happened to be a Sierra Leonean ex-combatant. As a Sierra Leonean, working with other Sierra Leoneans (who incidentally had been the national counterparts in the Humphreys and Weinstein study), I did not think too much about this at first. As the study progressed, however, I was struck by Amos' ease of mobility, and the incredible access and authority he enjoyed throughout Montserrado. I wondered how it was that this twenty-something-year-old Sierra Leonean had come to be so well known and, more so, respected by so many Liberian former fighters. On occasion, we were accompanied by a distant relative of one of the researchers, also a Sierra Leonean ex-combatant. During the fieldwork we noted several respondents reporting 'other' to the questions regarding their birthplace and where they were when the Liberian civil war started in 1989. While the survey was not designed to capture where those 'others' were born, some enumerators helpfully captured 'Sierra Leone', 'Guinea', and even 'Ghana' among the 1,500-odd interviewees. It rapidly became clear that a minority of ex-combatants who were born and had lived and fought in other, mostly neighbouring countries continued to reside in Liberia.

I never found out much more about Amos but I did learn that he was a former child soldier for the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone, and that he had crossed over to Liberia to fight with Charles Taylor's forces in the early 2000s, as part of the notorious Small Boys Unit. He had sisters and other relatives in Sierra Leone but for whatever reason was reluctant to return, although he had no discernible employment opportunities in Liberia, beyond accompanying the multitude of researchers coming through this rich research field. His story led me to thinking about what had brought these Sierra Leoneans and nationals of other countries to Liberia, what caused them to remain several years after the wars in both Sierra Leone and Liberia had ended and, importantly, whether the extensive peacebuilding efforts ongoing both in Liberia and Sierra Leone had adequately addressed their needs.

The phenomenon of regional combatants provides a compelling case for considering the conflicts that engulfed Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire (and which occasionally spilled over into Guinea) as 'regional' conflicts. Some reasons for this phenomenon of 'regional combatants' have been suggested in the research. For instance, numerous researchers and evaluations have demonstrated the shortcomings of both Liberia and Sierra Leone's disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes, as a contributing factor to incomplete demilitarisation (Benner et al. 2011; Bøås and Hatløy 2008; Humphreys and Weinstein 2004; Utas 2003). Others elaborate on broken social networks and fear of reprisals, which discouraged some ex-combatants from returning home. Further, and most commonly, economic or mercenary motivations are cited, pointing to the promise of financial gain or reward by recruiters, against a backdrop of limited opportunities at home (Hoffman 2011a; Human Rights Watch 2005).

These explanations require further interrogation, especially given the frequent cross-border participation of easily mobilised former fighters in neighbouring countries' conflicts, which reportedly persist, for instance at the Ivoirian–Liberian border. They also give rise to several questions: What are the implications of the exportation of violence away from home soil? What types of justifications do regional fighters produce for the exportation of this violence? Given the arguably holistic DDR programmes in Liberia and neighbouring Sierra Leone, coupled with active or recently concluded United Nations-led peace operations, what were the shortcomings of these programmes that caused a significant minority to 'opt out'? How appropriate have regional peacebuilding efforts been, especially considering the ongoing fragility of this West African sub-region, and what are their prospects for sustaining regional peace?

These questions form the basis of this thesis. In something of a departure from other studies on this topic, it combines an analysis of ex-combatants' motivations with an institutional analysis of policy responses and frameworks of international and regional collaboration, with the aim of informing long-term peacebuilding policies in the West African sub-region and beyond. As such, the thesis hopes to provide an entry point for

post-conflict regional stability initiatives to engage more meaningfully with ongoing regional security concerns embodied by non-state actors such as regional combatants, which are, among other outcomes, hampering regional integration and development efforts. While the thesis focuses on fighters from Liberia, Sierra Leone, and to a lesser extent Côte d'Ivoire, the research was primarily undertaken in Liberia, which could be considered as the catalyst for conflict in the West African sub-region (International Crisis Group 2003b, 2002).

The remainder of this chapter frames the thesis. Section 1.2 provides an overview of the conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, emphasising their regional nature, and highlighting the regional and international efforts that brought the wars to an end internally, even as regional dimensions persisted. Section 1.3 provides an overview of cross-border combatant movement in relation to the regionalisation of conflict. Section 1.4 elaborates on my research questions, while Section 1.5 provides an outline of the remainder of the thesis.

1.2. *A region at war*

1.2.1. Liberia

Liberia's war began in December 1989, when the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) entered Liberia's Nimba County from neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire. It was led by Charles Taylor, an Americo-Liberian who had received military training in Libya, after the Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaoré introduced him to Libya's Colonel Qaddafi, who had a history of supporting insurgencies in other West African countries, purportedly against puppet regimes of western imperialism. The invasion took place against a backdrop of severe economic difficulties, coinciding with the end of the Cold War, Liberia's demotion as a key United States (US) strategic ally in Africa, and more stringent conditions tied to US aid. This situation heightened the decline that had begun in the 1970s, with the international oil crisis and political agitation against the

Americo-Liberian² government of William Tolbert, which was overthrown in 1980 by Samuel Doe, an army officer from the Krahn ethnic group.

Doe's regime was no more democratic than his predecessor's, and was plagued by gross economic mismanagement and the violent consolidation of power. Over time, Doe promoted fellow ethnic Krahns who came to dominate both the military and the political elite, resulting in tensions between Krahn and other ethnic groups in Liberia. His regime was characterised by wholesale pillaging of the country's coffers: 'By the end of his rule, Doe and his cronies had stolen a reported \$300 million in public funds' (Adebajo 2002c: 27). He also eliminated potential rivals and closed off peaceful avenues for dissent, garnering many enemies in the process. Student protests in 1984 led to some deaths and he was reported to have killed more than 50 opponents by 1985 (Adebajo 2002c: 28). In the aftermath of a 1985 coup attempt by Thomas Quiwonkpa, a former army commander, whose popularity had led to his exile in 1983, the Krahn-dominated Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) killed an estimated 3,000 Gios (Quiwonkpa's ethnic group) and Manos in Nimba County (Adebajo 2002c: 30). After 1985, Doe's rule became even more absolute. Corruption increased, as did allegations of human rights abuses and ethnic polarisation. Doe was able to thwart coup attempts, in part with military support from the United States. Meanwhile, civil and political rights were trampled and standards of living plummeted.

The roots of the 1989 invasion are said to have been planted in Quiwonkpa's failed 1985 coup and the subsequent massacre of Nimba County 'citizens'. On 24 December 1989 Charles Taylor led a small invasion numbering hundreds into Nimba County from neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire, with tacit support from the Ivoirian President, Félix

² From 1847 until April 1980, Liberian politics was dominated by Americo-Liberian settlers. These were former slaves from the United States and their ancestors. They created a one-party state, ruled by the True Whig Party (TWP). Although the constitution was modelled on that of the United States, the Americo-Liberian elite monopolised power and restricted the voting rights and privileges of the indigenous African population. In the 1970s a combination of the international economic crisis and domestic political agitation against the Americo-Liberian government of William Tolbert culminated in a coup on 12 April 1980 when Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe, an indigenous Liberian of Krahn ethnicity, seized power and formed the People's Redemption Council (PRC).

Houphouët-Boigny. The NPFL mainly comprised and quickly absorbed disgruntled Gio soldiers and farmers mobilised in the aftermath of the 1985 attempted coup. To some extent, Houphouët-Boigny's decision to support Taylor was personal: in addition to killing Tolbert and 13 of his senior officials in the 1980 coup, Doe's regime later killed Tolbert's son, who was married to Houphouët-Boigny's adopted daughter (Adebajo 2002c: 30).

Fighters from other countries were involved from the outset. The NPFL was bolstered by Burkinabé soldiers, dissident Gambian soldiers and Sierra Leoneans, as well as other Liberians who had received 'revolutionary' training in Libya and Burkina Faso. Although they entered the country with a force numbering hundreds, by the end of May 1990 the NPFL had an estimated 10,000 fighters (Adebajo 2002a). The group quickly overran the country and entered the capital Monrovia in July 1990. Embattled, Doe was forced to offer a ceasefire and was killed later in the year by Prince Johnson, a former ally of Taylor, who had broken off to form his own faction, the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL).

Fearing the spillover effects of the Liberian conflict and the negative implications of regional insecurity on economic integration and development, the West Africa regional integration body, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), decided to intervene (this is discussed in further detail in Chapter 3). The next six years were characterised by numerous peace agreements, in which successive interim governments were set up, ceasefires declared, provisions made for disarming and demobilising troops, and democratic elections planned. By 1997, 13 peace agreements had been brokered by ECOMOG, with latter ones supported by the UN, but each was unsuccessful (Adebajo 2002a).

In 1990, the main factions were the AFL, the NPFL and the INPFL. By 1991, they were joined by the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO), a coalition of mainly Krahn and Mandingo fighters, including AFL soldiers, who had taken refuge in, and were subsequently armed by Sierra Leone. Doe's regime had recruited

many Krahn to the army which, as noted above, had been responsible for the massacre of Gios in 1985 and were therefore a target for the NPFL. As prominent traders, Mandingos, many with family connections to neighbouring Guinea, had been courted as allies to the Doe government, which had enabled them to establish themselves in Nimba County, which borders Guinea, displacing indigenous Manos and Gios. They were thus also targets for the NPFL (Allouche et al. 2016). ULIMO was supported and trained by the Sierra Leonean and Guinean governments to counter the NPFL, which was making incursions into their territories and threatening to destabilise their governments. By 1995, splinter and locale-specific groups had also begun to appear, and by 1997, the conflict had more than 10 factions, each with a particular ethnic identity and grievance (Ofuatey-Kodjoe 2002). These included ULIMO-J and ULIMO-K, after ULIMO 'split along ethnic lines, the Krahn-dominated ULIMO-J under Roosevelt Johnson, and the Mandingo-based ULIMO-K under Alhaji G.V. Kromah' (Allouche et al. 2016: 12); the Liberia Peace Council (LPC), a proxy force for the AFL, concentrated in the southeast and predominantly Krahn; and the Lofa Defense Force (LDF), mainly drawn from the Lorma ethnic group who aimed to protect themselves from the Mandingo-dominated ULIMO-K, among others.

Eventually, in 1996, a more definitive peace agreement was signed, supported by a joint ECOMOG/UN mission (UNOMIL) and Charles Taylor was elected Liberia's President in 1997. The UN observer mission UNOMIL, which had been established in 1993 to provide 'good offices' support to ECOWAS and the transitional government, withdrew shortly after, but hope that Charles Taylor's election to the Liberian presidency would result in lasting peace faded as war broke out once more in 1999. Opposition to Taylor's regime came first from Liberians Reunited for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), who launched their incursion in 1999 with support from Guinea. This was followed by the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), which launched its attack from Côte d'Ivoire, this time with backing from the new Ivorian president Laurent Gbagbo. Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire's support for these groups was partly in retaliation against Taylor's support for rebel elements within their borders. LURD forces were also bolstered by former Sierra Leonean combatants, mostly from

civilian defence forces (CDF) that had fought against the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel incursion in that country (see Section 1.2 below).

Despite being supported by RUF elements under the leadership of Sam 'Maskita' Bockarie, the RUF's military leader, it became clear that pro-Taylor forces were losing the war. With mounting international pressure, including the arrival of ECOMIL forces (an ECOWAS mission comprising Nigerian peacekeepers borrowed from the neighbouring UN Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone, UNAMSIL), Taylor was forced to step down as President in 2003 and go into exile in Nigeria. Highlighting his role as a regional warlord, Taylor was subsequently indicted for war crimes and tried in The Hague under the jurisdiction of the Special Court of Sierra Leone for his involvement in that country's conflict, in relation to aiding the RUF to commit atrocities. He was convicted in 2012.

Taylor's resignation paved the way for a ceasefire in June 2003 and for LURD, MODEL and Taylor's deputy to sign a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Accra, Ghana, on 18 August 2003. The CPA explicitly requested the UN to deploy an International Stabilization Force, with a mandate to observe and monitor the ceasefire, undertake DDR and weapons collection, coordinate and deliver humanitarian assistance, advise and support the Transitional Government, assist with security for elections and protection of civilians, and coordinate with ECOWAS, among other activities.

In September 2003 the UN Security Council adopted resolution (S/Res) 1509 (2003), establishing the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), under a Chapter VII mandate, consisting of 15,000 troops, which was to take over from ECOWAS-led ECOMIL (UN peace operations' mandates will be discussed further in Chapters 4 and 8). It was tasked with supporting the implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement, including disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR); protecting UN staff, facilities and civilians; supporting humanitarian and human rights assistance; supporting security sector reform; and supporting the implementation of the peace

process, including the re-establishment of national authority throughout the country and preparing for elections in 2005.

Importantly, and introducing language that would be repeated in future resolutions, the resolution highlighted the importance of a regional approach to security, noting that ‘lasting stability in Liberia will depend on peace in the sub-region’ and ‘the importance of cooperation among the countries of the sub-region to this end, as well as the need for coordination of United Nations efforts to contribute to the consolidation of peace and security in the sub-region’ (United Nations Security Council 2003c: 2).

UNMIL and other international partners helped the Liberian Government to disarm over 103,000 former combatants and associated women and children. The Mission also helped Liberia hold democratic elections in 2005, which produced Africa’s first democratically-elected female head of state, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. Peace has prevailed, with Johnson-Sirleaf winning a second term in office in 2011. Yet the peace dividend remains elusive for most of the population: poverty and corruption are rife; and progress on restorative justice and national reconciliation, as outlined as recommendations in an historic Truth and Reconciliation Commission report, remain unimplemented. Also, the limitations of post-conflict reintegration of ex-combatants were highlighted when the UN reported that about 4,500 Liberians were mobilised to participate in post-electoral violence in Côte d’Ivoire from 2010–2011 (Group of Experts on Côte d’Ivoire 2011c: 14). Nonetheless, UNMIL has been considered largely successful, and in December 2016, the UN Security Council extended its mandate for a final period until the end of March 2018, following presidential and legislative elections, scheduled for October 2017.

1.2.2. Sierra Leone

The Sierra Leone civil war started in 1991, when soldiers of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) launched an attack from neighbouring Liberia, with the assistance of NPFL soldiers and mercenaries from Burkina Faso (Francis et al. 2005). While RUF leader

Foday Sankoh claimed that the rebels aimed only to overthrow the corrupt government, the war was waged mainly against civilians, with the RUF adding to their ranks by abducting children and using them as soldiers and labourers. In addition, they mainly targeted diamond-mining areas.

In 1992, elements of the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) staged a coup and established a new government under the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), headed by Captain Valentine Strasser. NPRC began to prosecute the war with greater fervour, supported by ULIMO, one of the factions involved in Liberia's conflict. However, 'capital-city priorities' (Richards 1996: 10) began to take its leaders' attention away from the war, and allowed 'sobels' – soldiers by day, rebels by night – at the warfront to also engage in looting villages, diamond mining and smuggling. Their behaviour against the people they were meant to be defending resulted in communities mobilising hunter militias (mostly derived from traditional hunting societies, also collectively known as Kamajors) and CDF to protect civilians from both the RUF and rogue army elements. Unable to depend on its national army, the government hired Executive Outcomes, a South African mercenary firm with mining interests to dislodge the rebels from diamond mining areas, in return for mining concessions.

In 1995, the Strasser government moved towards reinstituting constitutional democracy and initiated peace talks with the rebels. Despite a 'Palace Coup' by Julius Maada Bio, elections went ahead as planned and Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) were voted into power in February 1996. Upon his installation as Head of State, Kabbah took over peace negotiations that had commenced in Côte d'Ivoire, although Sankoh questioned the legitimacy of the elections. In November 1996, pushed by international mediators, Sierra Leone government officials, RUF delegates and international representatives signed the Abidjan Accord. However, the agreement was stillborn, as the fighting continued unabated.

With Executive Outcomes gone (one of the conditions of the Accord), the government lost most of the ground it had gained prior to the peace agreements. In May 1997, elements of the army overthrew the Kabbah government, formed the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), and invited the RUF into the capital Freetown to join their regime. Although ECOMOG drove the AFRC-RUF alliance out of Freetown in March 1998 and restored the Kabbah government to power, the alliance continued to control much of the country and launched an offensive against Freetown in January 1999, with support from Charles Taylor, which was eventually repelled by ECOMOG and CDF. About 200 Nigerian soldiers had also been killed, and in 1999 newly elected President Obasanjo of Nigeria announced that given the material costs (he claimed ECOMOG was costing Nigeria an estimated US\$1 million daily) and loss of Nigerian personnel, he would begin withdrawing Nigerian troops, who comprised the bulk of the force, from ECOMOG (Adebajo 2002). The announcement resulted in the international community pressuring the Sierra Leone government into a new round of negotiations.

The resulting Lomé Peace Agreement, signed on 7 July 1999, granted the RUF blanket amnesty and a power-sharing arrangement. It also called for a 'neutral' peacekeeping force (Articles VXi and XIX of the Agreement), comprising UN and ECOMOG troops, that would be responsible for disarming combatants and disposing of or destroying weapons. In August, Obasanjo wrote to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, reiterating Nigeria's intention to withdraw troops (Adebajo and Keen 2007). To fill the security vacuum, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1270 on 22 October 1999 establishing the peacekeeping operation, United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), with a ceiling of 6,000 military personnel, and replacing the observer mission (UNOMSIL) established the previous year. Among its mandated tasks were support for the implementation of the Lomé Agreement, assistance with DDR, support of UN civilian operations, and provision of support for elections, as requested. For the first time in UN peacekeeping history, the Security Council also invoked Chapter VII of the UN Charter, allowing forces to take necessary action to 'ensure the security and

freedom of movement of its personnel and . . . to afford protection to civilians under imminent threat of physical violence’ (Article 14).

The Lomé agreement was marked by ‘widespread and serious’ violations (United Nations Security Council 2000a), including the abduction of 500 UNAMSIL peacekeepers by RUF soldiers in May 2000. After this particular incident, protestors demonstrated outside Sankoh’s Freetown residence, where his bodyguards opened fire on the crowd, killing some people. Sankoh fled but was arrested a few days later (he was later indicted by the Special Court of Sierra Leone for war crimes but died in 2003 while awaiting trial). In the meantime, British troops arrived to evacuate their own and other foreign nationals, and an 800-strong contingent remained to support the UNAMSIL peacekeepers. Later that month UNAMSIL was increased to 13,000 troops and in August 2000 the Security Council passed a resolution strengthening UNAMSIL’s ‘structure, capability, resources and mandate’. Following advocacy for a peace enforcement mandate under Chapter VII, the resolution authorised UNAMSIL to ‘deter and, where necessary, decisively counter the threat of RUF attack by responding robustly to any hostile actions or threat of imminent and direct use of force’ (S/Res 1313, United Nations Security Council 2000a), essentially authorising peacekeepers to fight the RUF. In March 2001, the Security Council increased UNAMSIL’s troop strength to 17,500 military personnel, at the time the largest UN peacekeeping deployment ever, in a country of about six million people. Disarmament began in earnest shortly thereafter, with UNAMSIL helping to disarm some 85,000 former combatants.

Some RUF and CDF fighters crossed over to Liberia instead, however, and joined the fighting that had resumed there. Some fighters also later moved to fight in Côte d’Ivoire when war broke out in that country in 2002 (Human Rights Watch 2005; International Crisis Group 2002, 2003b). In line with its mandate, UNAMSIL also helped Sierra Leone hold democratic elections in May 2002, and supported the government to consolidate its authority over the entirety of the country. UN peacekeeping operations wrapped up in Sierra Leone in December 2005, with activities taken over by successor peace consolidation missions, first the UN Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL,

up to 2008) then the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), which concluded its operations in March 2014. UN peace operations in Sierra Leone have been labelled a qualified success, despite their rocky start. Sierra Leone held its second round of post-conflict elections in August 2007, which saw a peaceful change in government from the incumbent SLPP, to the All People's Congress (APC), which retained power following elections in 2012.

1.2.3. Côte d'Ivoire

In the 1990s, as war raged in neighbouring Liberia and nearby Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, the engine of development in that part of West Africa, partly driven by hundreds of thousands of labourers from neighbouring countries, seemed to have escaped the scourge of conflict, even as it hosted thousands of refugees from, and its government covertly supported various armed factions in, Liberia. In 1993, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, who had been President since the country's independence in 1960, died. During his tenure he 'pursued economic development based on a plantation agriculture system' (Allouche et al. 2016: 8) that saw his country's economy boom, and which attracted tens of thousands of labourers from neighbouring countries, such that an estimated 26 percent of the population was of foreign origin, particularly from Burkina Faso.³

In the late 1990s, dangerous identity politics coalesced around a concept of *Ivoirité* (or Ivoirian-ness). This gave rise to discrimination against and the disenfranchisement of the multitude of 'foreigners', mostly originating from the Muslim north, and resulted in the barring of the main opposition candidate, Alassane Ouattara, who had been prime minister under Houphouët-Boigny, from standing in presidential elections in 1995 after a revision in the electoral code differentiated between those of 'pure' Ivoirian origin and those of 'mixed' heritage (International Crisis Group 2003a).⁴ Ouattara's Rally of

³ The 1998 census puts the number of Burkina Faso nationals resident in Côte d'Ivoire at over two million (International Crisis Group, 2011).

⁴ It was alleged that Ouattara's mother was from Burkina Faso, and as such he was ineligible to run for office under the *Ivoirité* regulations.

the Republicans (RDR) and the other main opposition group, the Ivoirian Popular Front (FPI), boycotted the elections, which were won by Henri Konan Bédié, who as National Assembly President had succeeded Houphouët-Boigny as President instead of Ouattara. RDR drew support from predominantly Muslim 'northerners' with ties to Mali and Burkina Faso, while FPI was mainly supported by people from the West and Southwest of Côte d'Ivoire. Bédié's Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) drew its support from the centre and east.

Bédié was overthrown in a military coup in December 1999, and succeeded by General Robert Guéï. Immediately before elections in 2000, a new law was introduced, requiring both parents of a presidential candidate to be born within Côte d'Ivoire, again excluding Ouattara and leading RDR to boycott the elections. Laurent Gbagbo of the FPI claimed victory in the resulting elections, although he was only able to take office after popular protest removed Guéï from power. According to Allouche et al., '[t]he conflict was sparked by a military uprising in September 2002 by some 800 soldiers about to be decommissioned from the military. These were mainly soldiers from the north who joined the armed forces during [Guéï's leadership], following the 1999 coup' (2016: 15). Armed men staged an unsuccessful attack on the headquarters of the paramilitary gendarmes in the commercial capital, Abidjan, and others took several hinterland towns such as Bouake, which had a significant weapons stockpile. They then 'rapidly consolidated their control over the north, purportedly with support from Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaoré, who had also been hosting former soldiers that had lost favour during the Guéï's junta' (ibid.). Their principle claim related to definitions of who qualified as an Ivoirian citizen (and could thus stand as a Presidential candidate), voting rights, and representation in government.

During the uprising, former president General Robert Guéï was killed in unclear circumstances, with the government of Laurent Gbagbo accusing him of leading the attempted coup. The violence spread rapidly, with dissident soldiers and rebels consolidating their hold over the largely Muslim north of the country as the *Forces Nouvelles* (FN). In the west, supporters of Guéï also marshalled themselves against

Gbagbo, with support from Liberia's Charles Taylor. Taylor had been Guéï's ally during his junta's rule, and while in power, 'Guéï, from the Yacouba ethnic group, had recruited fighters from neighbouring Liberia's Gio people' (Allouche et al. 2016: 15), who were ethnic 'cousins' of the Yacouba (and who, as discussed above, had formed the core of Charles Taylor's NPFL in the early stages of Liberia's civil conflict). After he left power his private forces included Liberian and Ivoirian soldiers who had trained in Liberia (International Crisis Group 2003a: 19).

Taylor was also accused of directly supporting the establishment and operations of two rebel groups in western Côte d'Ivoire, the Ivoirian Popular Movement of the Great West (MPIGO) and the Movement for Justice and Peace (MJP). Many Sierra Leonean (mostly RUF) fighters who had fled Sierra Leone to Liberia in 2000 with Samuel Bockarie, the RUF's former military commander, and were under Charles Taylor's protection, were also sent to fight in Côte d'Ivoire. Simultaneously Gbagbo, from the minority Bété ethnic group in the south-west, extensively recruited Liberian former combatants from counties bordering south-western Côte d'Ivoire and who fought under the banner 'Lima militias' (Human Rights Watch 2005), aligned with the Liberation Forces of the Far West (FLGO) and the Armed Forces of Côte d'Ivoire (FANCI). Many were recruited from MODEL, which the Ivoirian Government had allowed to recruit Liberian refugees on Ivoirian territory as well as to use the territory as a base from which to launch attacks against Taylor's forces in Liberia. In exchange MODEL helped to combat the Ivoirian rebels. While 'these fighters were perceived as being mostly from the Krahn ethnic group (traditional opponents of Taylor), with whose ethnic cousins the Ivoirian Guéré Gbagbo was aligned' (Allouche et al. 2016: 15) (all being part of the wider Kru or *Krou* linguistic group), it was apparent that financial incentives played a significant part in their participation (Human Rights Watch 2005; Mahoney 2005).

The first significant effort to bring an end to Côte d'Ivoire's conflict was the signing of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement by all Ivoirian political actors on 24 January 2003. The signatories promised to renounce violence, in advance of political reforms and the

organisation of free elections (Lamp and Trif 2009). The ceasefire agreement was jointly monitored by French and ECOWAS forces. Initially, instead of a UN peace mission, the UN Security Council, acting under Chapter VII and VIII of the UN Charter, formally authorised the ECOWAS and French peacekeeping operation in S/Res 1464 (2003). Subsequently, by S/Res 1479, the Council established the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI), a special political mission, to complement these efforts (United Nations Security Council 2003b).

Under pressure from the international community, Taylor reduced his support for anti-Government militias, but despite this and the establishment of MINUCI, fighting continued in Côte d'Ivoire, and the country effectively remained divided in two. Following continued violations of the ceasefire agreement, the Security Council, with S/Res 1528 of 27 February 2004, established the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), with a military strength of 6,240 personnel, incorporating the ECOWAS troops (United Nations Security Council 2004a). The resolution called for UNOCI 'to carry out its mandate in close liaison with the UN Missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone, including especially in the prevention of movements of arms and combatants across shared borders and the implementation of disarmament and demobilization programmes' (ibid.: 31). It mandated UNOCI to monitor the ceasefire and movements of armed groups; assist the government in disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, repatriation and resettlement; protect UN personnel, institutions and civilians; support humanitarian assistance; and support the implementation of the peace process, among other activities.

Presidential elections, originally scheduled for 2005, were postponed until October 2007. In March 2007, a more definitive peace agreement was signed between the Government and FN, and the FN political leader Guillaume Soro was appointed prime minister in early April, effectively bringing the war to an end. Thereafter, elections were again postponed several times until October 2010. The main contenders were Gbagbo, the incumbent, and Ouattara, who had finally been cleared to run. In the run-off between Gbagbo and Ouattara, the head of the Independent Electoral Commission

(CEI) declared Ouattara the winner, with 54.1 percent of the vote (Zounmenou and Loua 2011). The ruling party, however, claimed fraud in the north, which was controlled by the pro-Ouattara *Forces Nouvelles de Côte d'Ivoire* (New Forces of Côte d'Ivoire, FNCI), and the Constitutional Council declared the results from the Northern Departments void, declaring Gbagbo the victor. The international community, however, recognised Ouattara as the winner, with the UN Security Council passing a resolution to this effect. Four months of severe clashes followed between pro-Gbagbo and pro-Ouattara supporters which, as noted above included Liberians. These only ended with the capture of Gbagbo in April 2011 by pro-Ouattara *Forces républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire* (Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire, FRCI), with heavy support from French UN troops. The crisis resulted in the exodus of over 200,000 Ivoirians, including suspected militias, to neighbouring Liberia. Most have returned to Côte d'Ivoire, however, with an estimated 29,505 refugees remaining in neighbouring countries by the end of March 2017 (UNHCR 2017). Further, the country held peaceful presidential elections in October 2015, which saw Ouattara returned to power with an overwhelming majority, although voter turnout was only about 50 percent. In April 2016, the Security Council decided that UNOCI would cease operations in June 2017.

The brief summaries of each country's conflict highlight the interplay between the conflicts, and their increasingly regional nature as they wore on. Interestingly, this phenomenon was apparent even with the significant presence of regional and international peacekeepers and, in some cases, may have been exacerbated by their activities (such as the problematic implementation of DDR programmes). Against this backdrop it is imperative to understand how such levels of violence were mobilised and sustained across borders. The next section presents rough estimates of numbers and key periods of movement, and discusses the 'problematic' associated with such movements.

1.3. *From national to cross-border combat*

With reference to Darfur, Central African Republic and Chad, Debos (2008: 225) highlights armed combatants, who ‘easily shift allegiance and cross borders to carry on with their “politico-military careers”’, as a structural characteristic of conflict in that sub-region, with major local and transnational implications. She argues that the trajectories of such fighters are crucial to understanding the crisis. The situation that arose in the 1990s and early 2000s, and which resurfaced during the Côte d’Ivoire post-electoral crisis of 2010–2011, highlights a similar trajectory in West Africa, and emphasises the propensity for dissident nationals and formerly mobilised fighters to be drawn into neighbouring countries’ conflicts (International Crisis Group 2003b, 2002).

Official documented figures on regional combatants in the Mano River sub-region are relatively small compared to total disarmament numbers. For instance, official DDR figures from Liberia list that in all 612 ex-combatants self-identified as foreign nationals (of about 103,000 total disarmed), with the largest groups comprising 308 from Guinea and 242 from Sierra Leone (UNDDR 2006). However, Human Rights Watch (2005) research suggests that the numbers of Sierra Leonean fighters involved in Liberia’s war were much higher and that many registered for DDR as Liberians because they were afraid of being excluded from programmes. Similarly, in Côte d’Ivoire, Ivoirian President Gbagbo was able to deny the role of Liberians in his campaign against rebel groups because it was difficult to distinguish the French-speaking Liberian fighters from loyalist government forces (International Crisis Group 2003b). Indeed, the porous boundaries between the countries and familial ties across borders (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d’Ivoire) undoubtedly facilitated this regional movement and recruitment of fighters. For instance, during the Ivoirian war (2002–2006), many Liberians were recruited in Liberian towns that bordered Côte d’Ivoire, and issued with fake ID cards to facilitate their cross-border movement (Silberfein and Conteh 2006).

Human Rights Watch estimates that:

at least five hundred NPFL and a similar number of ULIMO fighters took part in Sierra Leone's armed conflict, while a combined force of at least one thousand RUF and Liberian government troops participated in the 2000–2001 cross-border attacks on Guinea. During the 2002–2003 armed conflict in Côte d'Ivoire, the number of Liberians fighting for the Ivorian government was estimated to be between 1,500 and 2,500, while close to one thousand were thought to have fought alongside Ivorian rebels. The 1999–2003 Liberian war seems to have drawn in well over one thousand regional warriors, the vast majority of whom fought alongside the LURD. (Human Rights Watch 2005: 13)

The International Crisis Group estimates from various sources that 'between 600 and 2,000 RUF crossed into Liberia by the end of 2001, with active elements operating in Lofa County just across the border, rallying RUF combatants' (International Crisis Group 2002: 6). Nilsson (2008) further notes that about 750 former CDF and 1,200 former RUF fighters left Sierra Leone to participate in Liberia's civil war. These are all conservative estimates; it is likely that actual figures of regional combatants run to the thousands. Indeed, as mentioned above, while a likely over-estimation, the UN cited a figure of 4,500 Liberian former combatants mobilised during the 2010–2011 Ivorian crisis (see Table A1.1 in Annex 1).

Cross-border fighting was not limited to Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. Although Guinea did not experience civil conflict while three of its neighbours were at war, a significant amount of recruitment – among dissident Guineans and in refugee camps – and fighting took place on its soil, between opposing Sierra Leonean and Liberian forces. Further, the Guinean authorities mobilised its armed forces against both the RUF and Charles Taylor, and provided extensive support to ULIMO, LURD and other Liberian groups. Since 2001, conditions in Guinea have remained politically unstable. This situation deteriorated after 2003 as LURD members with ethnic ties crossed into Guinea with their weapons to avoid disarmament. Lacking employment opportunities, some began to loot, harass, and generally create havoc and ethnic unrest in southeast Guinea (Silberfein and Conteh 2006). In 2004, Human Rights Watch interviewed Liberian and Sierra Leonean ex-combatants who claimed they had been

asked to join fighting missions in Guinea on behalf of both the government and insurgent groups during periods of instability, with reports of Liberian and Sierra Leonean ex-combatants pre-positioning themselves for possible combat in 2009, following the December 2008 coup.⁵ Further afield, in 2012 and 2013, there were rumours of recruitment taking place in Liberia for fighters to participate in the conflict in Mali. Although these cannot be substantiated, at least two of my respondents in 2013 claimed that they, or ex-combatants they knew, had been approached to go to Mali.

A striking feature of the main periods of these movements (late 1990s and early 2000s) is that they coincided with the scaling up of international peace operations in each of the three countries. It therefore appeared that the presence of UN peacekeepers was not sufficient to deter cross-border movements, and despite significant sub-regional involvement in addressing the contiguous conflicts, these were not significantly geared towards addressing the cross-border dynamics of combatant movements, even as UN sanctions and embargo regimes fought to halt timber, diamonds and guns from crossing borders and fuelling the regional conflict: indeed, much of the investigation into the regional dynamics of West African conflict have focused on the 'big' or 'strong men' behind this trade, such as Charles Taylor, and on the regional nature of the conflict as a consequence of 'natural resource wars', i.e. conflict enabled by a network of violence and exchange, of timber, diamonds, gold and weapons, for instance (Keen 2000; Reno 2000).

In contrast, this thesis explores the motivations of those individuals who exported their warcraft to their neighbours because, as others have noted, the need to deal with the threat posed by former fighters, who constitute a threat to durable peace, is considered paramount to long-term stability (Higate and Henry 2009; Nilsson 2008; Humphreys and Weinstein 2004). This thesis looks at the motivations behind these movements and their implications for long-term peace and stability in the region. In

⁵ Reported by some ex-combatant interviewees as well as researchers based in Liberia at the time.

doing so, it hopes to contribute to the study of and mechanisms for addressing contagion conflicts that persist especially in ‘no-man’s land’ border areas in Africa and elsewhere.

This thesis initially planned to consider three periods of movement: the start of the conflicts in Sierra Leone and Liberia in the early 1990s; the exodus of Sierra Leoneans to Liberia in the late 1990s and their participation in Liberia’s second phase of conflict from 1999; and the participation of Sierra Leoneans and Liberians from the start of the Ivoirian conflict in 2002. Just after I completed the pilot phase of my fieldwork in 2010, however, Côte d’Ivoire became embroiled in a post-electoral crisis that lasted six months from October 2010, which as noted above reportedly involved up to 4,500 Liberians, some six years after Liberia completed its DDR programme and had even officially declared that its youthful participants in that country’s conflict should no longer be referred to as ‘ex-combatants’. The unfortunate turn of events gave added impetus and urgency to my study because, as the Panel of Experts on Côte d’Ivoire (2011a: 10) noted

The reigniting of internal conflict in Côte d’Ivoire has already had an impact on neighbouring States and, by consequence, altered their relations with Ivorian parties. The Group is deeply concerned because the conflict has already reached a stage where some neighbouring countries, in efforts to protect their national interests, have lent assistance to parties in the conflict, including supplies of weapons and related materiel in violation of the arms embargo. The Group believes that, should hostilities gain in intensity and duration, their escalation into a regional conflict cannot be ruled out.

The crisis also enabled me to consider the issues the thesis was concerned with, especially in relation to the peacebuilding responses of UN operations, ‘in real time’, particularly when, even after the post-electoral crisis was officially at an end with Ouattara’s assumption of the presidency, Côte d’Ivoire’s border region continued to be besieged by hit-and-run attacks that were apparently launched from Liberia and carried out by Liberian ex-combatants and Ivoirian militias residing Liberia. The Panel of Experts for Liberia mention notable cross-border attacks in September 2011, April 2012, June 2012 (during which seven UNOCI peacekeepers were killed), August 2012, and March 2013 (Panel of Experts on Liberia 2013a, 2013b, 2012a, 2012b). While

cross-border attacks tapered off in 2014, there were still at least two in 2014, one in 2015 and one in 2016 within 50 kilometres of the Liberian border, with Côte d'Ivoire continuing to presume that they were carried out by Ivoirian militias still residing in Liberia (a summary of these attacks, with further details of their impacts, is listed in Table A1.2 in Annex 1). Against this backdrop I now consider my research questions.

1.4. *Research questions*

As highlighted in the previous sections, I am interested in the extent to which international peacebuilding initiatives are able to address the regional dimensions of otherwise internal conflicts, and the factors that limit their effectiveness. As such, it may be appropriate to ask: what are the limitations of international peacebuilding approaches in addressing long term regional peace and security? Or, put more starkly: why did international peacebuilding initiatives fail to prevent regional conflict in West Africa? Within this subject, for reasons that will be elaborated in subsequent chapters, I am primarily concerned with why and how combatants' motivations and mobilisation resulted in a situation wherein ex-combatants in one context became regional combatants in another, and the extent to which national and regional peacebuilding approaches have engaged with these motivations and mobilisations. Thus, the main question this thesis aims to address is:

Why were international peacebuilding efforts ineffective in addressing the phenomenon of regional combatants, which contributed to the spread of regional conflict in the Mano River Union sub-region of West Africa?

This raises the following sub-questions:

1. What are regional combatants' motivations for moving to participate in neighbouring countries' conflicts?

2. To what extent do peace operations and on-the-ground peacebuilders take into consideration these motivations when developing peacebuilding and regional stabilization strategies? What limits them from effectively considering these motivations?
3. To what extent are the resulting strategies effective in promoting regional peacebuilding?

1.5. *Thesis structure*

This chapter has provided a background to the thesis, including the context of the ‘regional’ conflicts encompassing Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d’Ivoire. Academically, it contributes to the conflict and peace literature, particularly in relation to regional peacebuilding, and with the focus on regional ex-combatants, highlights the importance of adequately engaging sub-state actors in post-conflict peacebuilding. It is also fundamentally concerned with policy-making processes in international peace operations. The chapter has also introduced key concepts that will be explored in subsequent chapters – including ‘regional combatants’ and ‘regional security’ and ‘regional peacebuilding’.

Chapter 2 elaborates on the literature on combatant motivations. It draws on the ‘causes of conflict’ literature to consider motivations along the greed–grievance spectrum, but notes the need to go beyond these in considering motivations for regional combat which, to date, have centred on financial incentives.

Chapter 3 picks up on the concepts of regional peace and security, looking especially at the regional responses to the challenges posed by regional conflict, which served as the first efforts to contain the conflicts. It then turns to the theoretical approaches that have aimed to make sense of these interventions, highlighting their limitations in the context of peacebuilding. It draws on ‘new regionalisms’ approaches to emphasise the necessarily transnational, multi-layered nature of peace-making and peacebuilding.

Chapter 4 focuses on UN peacebuilding processes, which took over from regional peacekeeping efforts in West Africa, considering their evolution and maturation, including in West Africa, while pointing once again to the limitations of their theoretical underpinnings, especially for regional conflict. Based on the discussion in this and the preceding two chapters, Chapter 4 concludes with a presentation of a constructivist multi-layered framework that considers mechanisms for analysing the relationship between combatant motivations and peacebuilding practice, mediated by the regional context.

Chapter 5 discusses the resulting research design that informed the study, as well as the methodology and methods applied, including institutional ethnography, in-depth interviews, focus group discussion and extensive participant-observation. It further highlights issues to do with reflexivity and ethics arising from undertaking an institutional ethnography of peacebuilding institutions from the position of being an employee of one such institution, and outlines the discourse analysis approach, encompassing both narrative and textual analysis, that was applied to analysing the research.

Against this backdrop, Chapter 6 presents my data and discusses the findings from my research on regional combatants' motivations and movements, relative to the literature, and how these were shaped and changed by moving to neighbouring countries to fight. In addition to analysing the extent to which prevailing theories about ex-combatants' reasons for moving to fight are applicable to the ex-combatants interviewed for my thesis, I consider the ways in which their articulation of particular identities advances or constrains their interests.

Chapter 7 situates the regional ex-combatant within the transnational environment of the borderland micro-region, building on the narratives discussed in the previous chapter. It considers how such narratives are given shape and further impetus through border communities' interactions with a far-removed state, and begins to consider the implications of this for peacebuilding initiatives.

Chapter 8 considers institutional regional peacebuilding responses in the MRU. It takes as its starting point the multiple UN Security Council mandates for peace operations in the MRU countries, with a focus on their provisions for regional peacebuilding efforts. It considers how these mandates are decided, crafted and sustained, exploring the ways in which the disconnect between 'Headquarters' and 'the field' serves to constrain effective implementation on the ground, while at the same time demonstrating that this disconnect is more apparent than real, as the field has myriad mechanisms and avenues for influencing mandates, and room to manoeuvre to interpret mandates.

This sets up the discussion in Chapter 9, which moves on to the on-the-ground implementation of these Security Council mandates, examining a range of UN and regional approaches in the region aimed at addressing the regional dynamics of conflicts in this West African sub-region, and contrasts these against the motivations elaborated on in Chapters 6 and 7, expanding on their limitations.

Chapter 10 concludes the empirical section of my thesis with a consideration of national and bilateral approaches, levels of analysis that are not explicit in much of my discussion but cannot and should not be ignored. Often, however, these approaches are supported by the UN and regional actors, and as such suffer from many of the same constraints discussed in previous chapters.

Chapter 11 brings together the different strands of my thesis. Recalling my conceptual framework set out in Chapter 4, it suggests some contributions to the literature and summarises the implications of my research for regional peacebuilding and peace-making in the MRU region and beyond. The analysis demonstrates that while economic motivations feature prominently in regional ex-combatants' motivations, other motives are also important but receive limited attention by peacebuilding institutions, resulting in responses that are limited in scope and effectiveness. A key lesson is the importance of understanding the opportunities that arise from transnational imperatives that translate into cross-border movements, thus opportunities to

reinforce a regionalism, and regional peacebuilding agenda, that work at both formal and informal levels.

2. (Whose) local perspectives matter: focusing on regional combatants and their motivations

The previous chapter's overview of the course and conclusion of conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire highlighted at least three inter-related issues. Firstly, it signposted the common problem of partially demobilised fighters with seemingly fluid loyalties available to fight in neighbouring countries. Secondly, it highlighted how the regional implications of the inter-connected conflicts necessitated sub-regional peacekeeping intervention. Thirdly, it emphasised the role of international (UN-led) actors in bringing each of the conflicts to a sustained conclusion, at least at national levels, and the subsequent peacebuilding efforts. The research questions are essentially an inquiry into the implications of these three issues for long-term peace and security in the sub-region. The next three chapters will focus on the literature and main concepts related to each of these areas, culminating in my proposed conceptual framework at the close of Chapter 4. In this chapter, Section 2.1 expands on combatants and ex-combatants as a focus for peacebuilding studies. Section 2.2 elaborates on the literature regarding their motivations and mobilisation to violence. Section 2.3 problematises the preceding discussion, especially given the limited literature on motivations for *moving* to fight (Nilsson 2008: 12).

2.1. *Why ex-combatants?*⁶

Weiss and Thakur observe that '[t]o build peace, we must understand the nature and causes of conflict' (2010: 61). While they critique micro-theories that focus on individual behaviour as falling into a 'trap of biological pessimism' (ibid.), many studies on conflict and peace have advocated for a micro-level perspective, with particular focus on individual combatant motivations (Blattman and Miguel 2009; Arjona and Kalyvas 2006; Weinstein 2006; Humphreys and Weinstein 2004).

⁶ I must note a definitional problem here, wherein some (particularly humanitarians) define an ex-combatant as a person who has 'genuinely and permanently' renounced military activities/all former attributes of a combatant (UNHCR, 2006a: 17) but this clearly is not the case for the group that I am studying. The implications of this problematic will be taken up in the empirical chapters.

In post-conflict contexts, as ‘potential “spoilers”’ (Alden et al. 2011: 2), former fighters constitute a threat to durable peace, for instance by participating in organised violence as members of illegal armed groups, and undermining the legitimacy of post-conflict governments (Nilsson 2008; Humphreys and Weinstein 2004, 2008). Stedman et al. (2002: 109) note, ‘the demobilisation of soldiers and their reintegration into civilian life is the single most important sub-goal of peace implementation.’ These assertions demonstrate the importance of understanding what mobilised fighters in the first place, and the mechanisms that aid their demobilisation in peacetime (Alden et al. 2011). The act of moving to fight – essentially voting against demobilisation with one’s feet – requires further interrogation. Is it indicative of the extent to which fighters’ socio-political and economic objectives have not been achieved? Or the extent to which peace negotiations and post-conflict arrangements, including disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes, have failed to cater to belligerents’ grievances? These are the questions this thesis attempts to answer.

It is worthwhile to pause here and briefly consider DDR, which is the main conduit through which ex-combatants are supported to become active participants in the peace process and to reintegrate them socially and economically into society (United Nations 2014). As such, it is important to understand its underlying assumptions (Alden et al. 2011; Hutchful and Aning 2004). The main activities associated with DDR programmes include:

disarmament . . . the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons from combatants and often from the civilian population; demobilization . . . the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces and groups, including a phase of ‘reinsertion’, which provides short-term assistance to ex-combatants; [and] reintegration . . . the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income . . . a political, social and economic process with an open time-frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level. (United Nations Peacekeeping n.d.)

These interventions are aimed at addressing factors that motivated fighters in the first place, and creating a post-conflict environment that minimises these motivations.

Before turning to the literature, I close this section with a brief discussion of the notion of ‘combatant’. At its simplest, a ‘combatant’ is defined as all members of the armed forces, whether regular or irregular, of a party to the conflict, except medical and religious personnel (International Committee of the Red Cross n.d.). In terms of non-state armed combatants, for the purposes of this thesis, the term includes a range of groups such as militias, who are defined by Alden et al. (2011: 4) as ‘a military force composed of civilians outside the state’s formal military structure’, which ‘apply violence in pursuit of their respective objectives . . . [and] publicly explain and defend their armed presence by the need for “self-defence” as understood by their own trajectory.’ This definition reflects, as reinforced by Hutchful and Aning (2004: 197) that ‘the distinction between combatants and civilians is unclear’ and as such, ‘there are no “fronts,” no “lines,” no “uniforms,” and “no formal hierarchies”’ which, as we will see in cross-border conflict, is particularly salient.

Much of the discussion above and below also justifies a focus on a group that is variously termed as conflict entrepreneurs and intermediaries, that is, those people who mobilise combatants, fund conflicts or are the middlemen between the funders of conflicts and rank-and-file fighters. As discussed in Chapter 1, however, some of these groups have been extensively addressed in causes of (regional) war literature related to big man politics and natural resources conflict. While recognising the importance of these groups, I have chosen to focus mainly on the foot soldiers, in part as discussed in greater detail below, to interrogate the notion of combatants as passive subjects, rather than rational, active agents, which to my thinking largely constrains appropriate responses to the real threats they pose post-conflict. I thus now turn to the prevailing literature on their motivations.

2.2. *Greed and grievance as motivations*

Macroeconomic research on the causes of violent civil conflict has long highlighted the importance of economic incentives to fight. In the early 2000s this coalesced around the ‘greed over grievance model’ based on a panel dataset of wars between 1960 and 1999 in 161 countries (Collier et al. 2004; Collier and Hoeffler 2002, 2000). Collier and

colleagues found that economic variables have a greater explanatory power for the causes of civil war than political and social variables related to grievances – or, as they put it, ‘the greed model considerably outperforms the grievance model’ (Collier and Hoeffler 2000: 1). This model asserts that ‘the cause of initial conflict is an economic calculus of relative military advantage, the government’s ability to finance defense expenditure, the scale of primary commodity exports, and the *costs of rebel recruitment*’ (2000: 13, emphasis mine). Collier et al. further found that the high incidence of civil wars in Africa was attributable to the continent’s poor economic performance, in both absolute and relative (to other regions) terms (Collier et al. 2004; Collier and Hoeffler 2002). Economic or selective incentives provide a critique of grievance and ideological imperatives that aid rebel recruitment, and instead emphasise the ‘logic’ of collective action, and the presence of selective incentives to stimulate rational individuals in an otherwise latent group to act collectively (Olson 1971). The greed model also emphasises the political economy of conflict, which acknowledges the economic utility of violence (Keen 2000; Reno 2000). In relation to rebel groups, the argument has since been consolidated to mean the opportunities the group faces, disaggregated into financing (most commonly the appropriation of natural resources), recruitment (especially from the high proportion of young, unemployed males) and geographical safe havens (Murshed and Tadjoeeddin 2009).

Indeed, studies on the West African conflicts highlight some element of the ‘greed’ motive. For instance, Humphreys and Weinstein’s study (2004) indicates that across factions, material motivations mattered for the recruitment of fighters (for instance, RUF combatants were promised jobs, money, and women). They also find, however, that material benefits, both those promised and actually received, were typically just sufficient to satisfy basic needs: most fighters were not directly engaged in the lucrative natural resource trades and when the groups encountered valuable goods, they passed them on to their commanders. Further, the greed motive was not universal. For instance, the Civilian Defence Forces (CDF) helped to meet the basic needs of the members and provided increased security for their families but fighters were forbidden from taking valuable goods, and few expected material benefits (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004: 28–29).

In fact, both econometric research and anthropological empirical case study research, both focusing on the micro-level, have found that grievance arguments retain much currency (see Blattman and Miguel 2010; Murshed and Tadjoeeddin 2007 for a review of such studies). De Koning (2007: 38) points to 'strong political and social grievances ... that provided important motives for violent struggle' in relation to the rebel narratives in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. Similarly, Richards argues that the conflicts in Sierra Leone and Liberia may be attributed to grievances arising from social exclusion, which made youths in these countries particularly susceptible to militia recruitment. He considers that 'social solidarity collapsed around a forced division of labour' (2005: 285), with young people exploited for their labour through local marriage rules, exacerbated by their abandonment by the State. He suggests (as does Utas (2003), discussing Liberia) that the (largely rural) conflicts arose from failure to introduce agrarian reforms, which undermined interclass and intergenerational cohesion, led to frustrations around customary land and marriage law, and resulted in the agents of rebellion finding pliant material for insurgency (Richards 2005, 2003, 1996). Richards further observes that the resulting lack of education and employment opportunities propelled disenfranchised and marginalised youths to join fledgling rebel groups, such as the RUF in Sierra Leone and NPRC in Liberia (Richards 2005). In line with Richard's observation about the collapse of the social contract/institutional failure, Utas (2003) argues that the 1970s economic collapse in Liberia caused gerontocratic leadership to slide even further into the decline that had begun as a result of state-led modernisation projects. The war created alternative power structures, and participation in it provided children and youths with 'unprecedented access to power and the trappings of modernity' (Utas 2003: 116), and allowed them to attain adulthood through the possession of land, houses and wives. While invoking both relative deprivation and selective incentives in the form of private benefits as motivating factors in Liberia's war, his principal thesis is that in Liberia, the marginalisation of young people is the central factor. Bøås and Hatløy (2008) also find that marginalisation and lack of societal opportunities were factors in Liberia.

These arguments are not only made by anthropologists. For instance, Keen, a political economy analyst, underscores the need to investigate how greed generates grievance

and rebellion. Speaking specifically of Sierra Leone, he notes that the civil war ‘cannot really be understood without comprehending the deep sense of anger at lack of good government and educational opportunities (the significance of the latter suggesting a problem with taking lack of education as a proxy for greed rather than grievance)’ (Keen 2000: 35). He further argues that in Sierra Leone, young people fought because of political grievances.

This discussion demonstrates that motivations are multiple and varied. Indeed, many studies have critiqued the ‘greed vs. grievance’ dichotomy itself and advocated for blurring the lines between the two approaches. Murshed and Tadjoeeddin (2009) assert that Collier et al.’s emphasis of the poverty trap as a factor of greed is not intuitive, as relative deprivation and the grievance that arises from it can fuel internal violence. They argue that neither greed nor grievance alone is sufficient to explain the outbreak of violent conflict, which further requires institutional breakdown (the failure of the ‘social contract’; Murshed and Tadjoeeddin 2009: 102). Similarly, Richards (2005: 10) wonders why is it “‘greedy’ to want a basic education or job?” and argues that when the variables are considered ‘political’ – for instance the combination of resource wealth with poverty and high unemployment – the distinction between greed and grievance disappear. Richards (2005) further argues that in African countries, in the absence of institutional contracts, social contracts in this context took the form of patrimonialism. He notes that the economic crisis of the 1970s and 1980s, which resulted in the downsizing of state institutions and the weakening of revenue-sharing arrangements between central governments and traditional authorities, led to the breakdown of these patrimonial networks, particularly in rural areas (ibid.), thus contributing to conflict.

2.3. Moving beyond greed and grievance: other explanations for fighting in West Africa

Overall, the rich literature on combatant motivations in West Africa (including Hoffman 2011a; Bøås and Hatløy 2008; Humphreys and Weinstein 2008, 2004;

Richards 2005; Ferme and Hoffman 2004; Utas 2003, among others)⁷ recognises the multiple and varied factors along the greed–grievance spectrum that influence individuals’ decisions to fight. But for some commentators this is not sufficient. Inasmuch as recognition of the greed–grievance spectrum reflects an increasingly comprehensive approach, they still demonstrate a preoccupation with binary greed–grievance perspectives. African researchers particularly have critiqued this approach. For instance, Hutchful and Aning (2004: 204) observe that focus on material incentives in West Africa’s conflicts has prevented analysis and identification of true sources of vulnerability or resilience in a society. Further, they observe (2004: 198) that economistic rationales, having found resonance in ‘influential policy circles in which a nuanced understanding of African issues is important to informing policy debates and discussions’ continued to dominate responses.

We are to further realise that these ‘conflicts are often intertwined with issues of political and economic marginalization, as well as social exclusion, identity, and citizenship’ (Hutchful and Aning 2004: 200). As such, Hutchful and Aning urge us to ‘place greater emphasis on the psychological, cultural, and ideological mechanisms that bind or alienate youth and other critical groups from the community and from authority figures’ (2004: 204).

Such perspectives are sadly lacking in literature on West African combatants. Where they stray beyond greed–grievance, they look at mobilisation through fear or threats. In Liberia and Sierra Leone particularly, much has been written about the forced conscription of children to the various fighting factions. Humphrey and Weinstein’s (2008) sample shows only 12 percent of the RUF joined voluntarily, despite otherwise reporting that they fought to express dissatisfaction, root out corruption and bring down the existing regime. While they acknowledge that abduction may be overrepresented because of self-reporting, ‘qualitative evidence suggests that the vast

⁷ While this thesis is largely concerned with young males, it is important to recognise the excellent research on motivations among other groups. This includes Chris Coulter’s (2009) work on the experience of girls and women during Sierra Leone’s war, which provides excellent relevant insights on livelihood options in war and peace, and post-conflict kinship relations. It also includes Peters’ and Richards’ (1998) research demonstrating agency among child recruits in Sierra Leone.

majority of RUF combatants were abducted, with grievances, selective incentives, and social sanctions rendered largely irrelevant in the individual decision about whether to join' (2008: 445).

A few studies have moved beyond these motivations, emphasising their strategic nature. For instance, in Liberia most of Bøås and Hatløy's (2008) interviewees cited security concerns – for themselves, their families and communities – rather than idleness, poverty or political reasons, when asked why they joined an armed faction. Their data indicates that relatively few combatants saw war as an 'occupation' or an opportunity to loot; rather, decisions to take up arms, including switching between different armed factions, were based on protecting themselves and their families, livelihoods, and local communities. Another take on this relates to coping and survival strategies, whereby a member of a household joined the occupying force as a way of safeguarding the family, or for securing access to hard-to-come-by provisions.

These findings relate to studies on the costs of non-participation, which recognises that people will participate in a conflict to better manage the risks associated with conflict (Moore 1966; Scott 1976; Goodwin 2001; Mason and Krane 1989, referenced in Humphreys and Weinstein 2008). Such studies critique the selective incentives paradigm by arguing that at least in the short term, the public cost of non-participation overcomes the incentive to free-ride and compels individuals to participate (Kalyvas and Kocher 2007). Other studies have highlighted the relationship between poverty and conflict, including that high levels of poverty compel individuals to fight where they may gain more from being fighters (Justino 2009).

This is reflected in some of Humphreys and Weinstein's (2008) findings. They note their research finds evidence that 'participation in a military faction does depend on an individual's relative social and economic position, the costs and benefits of joining, and the social pressures that emanate from friends and community members' (2008: 452). Similarly, in Sierra Leone, as homes were destroyed and families killed, young people joined the conflict in defence of their kin and their communities. Humphreys and Weinstein (2008: 437) note that many fighters joined the CDF to guard their

communities against the twin threats of the RUF and dissidents from the Sierra Leone Army (SLA). They further found that among the CDF, 77 percent of respondents reported being recruited by a friend, relative, or community leader, and typically joined units in which they had family members, friends, or members of their communities. Just 15 percent joined on their own. This pattern of recruitment was also found among the other two main actors in Sierra Leone's conflict, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and the Sierra Leone Army (SLA), who were mostly recruited through relatives (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004). Despite this, they are still able to conclude that 'the widespread assumption that individuals have agency in making choices about participation is empirically suspect' (Humphreys and Weinstein 2008: 437), with their sample demonstrating abduction as an essential recruitment strategy.

Yet it is important to understand that combatants do have agency, as evidenced by various strategies applied in and subsequent to conflict. In relation to cross-border conflict, Ferme and Hoffman demonstrate this in their discussion on Kamajors' engagement with humanitarian discourse and practice as they moved from Sierra Leone to Liberia. They argue that 'once militias left their local functions of grassroots civil defence units and moved beyond the territories where they were recruited, they made strategic decisions in combat based on a selective interpretation of humanitarian discourse and practices' (2004: 73). As Hoffman (2011a: xx) further notes, 'fighters with the [MRU] region's various militias are well aware of the impact their images have on a world audience and they use it to great effect.' Hutchful and Aning also note that 'self-serving ex post facto explanations of rebel groups can rarely be taken at face value' (2004: 199).

These examples illustrate that combatants can be more **strategic** (i.e. exercise control over the decisions they take) than they are given credit for, as their behaviour is often defined as tactical, i.e. narrow and opportunistic, oriented towards basic survival. Indeed, for Alden et al. 'militias are lucid, **rational actors** operating within the international system', where '[r]ationality must be understood as **socially constructed**

and an actor's interests and behaviour are subject to socializing norms, and, as such, are fundamentally mutable' (2011: 27, emphasis mine).

Researchers have highlighted further motivating factors in other, arguably similar, contexts. One of these is **ideology**, often dismissed by international political economy adherents. Yet, Sanín and Wood (2014) argue that while predominant literature either dismisses ideology as a rhetorical device, reduces it to 'some structural variable', or argues that 'their potential effects are overridden by situational logics', ideology is important analytically in at least two ways: first, it socialises combatants into a coherent group, prioritises goals and coordinates external actors; secondly, some groups' (or some individuals in a group's) normative commitment to a particular ideology can constrain their strategic or otherwise rational choices (so they appear un-strategic or irrational to external observers). Ideology is not much considered in the West African contexts although there is evidence that ideology initially served as a rallying point during the Sierra Leone conflict.

Other discussions on mobilisation dwell on **social identities** and how these may be energised or manipulated towards violence. Black (2008) notes that groups formed on the basis of social identity 'are always and everywhere the main constituents of political struggle. On occasion that struggle escalates . . . into a mutually destructive conflict'. He goes on to note: 'It is widely recognized that some of the most recalcitrant of deep-rooted, fundamental conflicts are those between identity groups' (2008: 149). Most recently, this has focused on religion, particularly as debates on religious Islamic radicalisation to violence have played out in popular media. Additionally, conflicts in other parts of Africa (particularly the Great Lakes region) have spawned a great volume of literature on the mobilisation and/or manipulation of ethnic identities to considerable violence, including across borders. This has been largely absent from analyses of West African conflicts, with the exception of Côte d'Ivoire (although Ganesen and Vines caution that the situation there constituted a 'cynical exploitation of ethnicity' (2004: 303)). In all three countries, however, this has been highlighted in the scant literature on motivations for moving to fight. For instance, of the CDF

fighters that moved from Sierra Leone to Liberia and Guinea to support the Liberians Reunited for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), Ferme and Hoffman note that

These tended to be combatants with family ties on both sides of the border, or those who had previously spent time in Liberia working and/or fighting with one of the factions in the earlier Liberian civil war. Given the extensive networks of trade and migration (voluntary and forced) throughout the Mano River region, this amounted to a substantial number of young men who expressed some degree of personal connection to communities across the national borders—an identification underscored by ethnic and linguistic allegiances that do not map onto official state boundaries. (2004: 78)

Similarly, those Liberians who fought for Gbagbo particularly (both in the early 2000s and in 2010–2011) were considered to be ethnically related to pro-Gbagbo communities in western Côte d'Ivoire (Panel of Experts on Liberia 2012b; Human Rights Watch 2005).

Identities are not limited to religion or ethnicity. Focusing on post-conflict identities, Nilsson argues that 'for demobilized fighters, the most salient identity is the group identity they share as members of an ex-combatant community' (2008: 13), an association that offers both psychological and social benefits. He continues:

this identity is partly a product of history, as the interpretation of the recent conflict and the violence committed can become part of the identity of opposing groups, and partly a result of interaction between 'ingroup' and 'outgroup' processes in the post-war period . . . Ingroup processes refer to how individual former fighters strive to retain their factional identity, because membership in the ex-combatant community offers psychological and social benefits that are desirable. (Nilsson 2008: 13)

This aspect highlights a critical dimension – that of the '**group**', which, as Stewart notes, is important for individual welfare and social stability. She considers that group membership is an intrinsic part of human life, and hypothesises that an important factor that differentiates the violent from the peaceful is the existence of severe inequalities between culturally defined groups, which she defines as 'horizontal inequalities' (Stewart 2002: 3).

Hoffman critiques identity-based explanations, however, arguing that '[a]n anthropology too wedded to the language of belonging, autochthony, and ethnicity

risks reproducing a very conservative mode of identity politics' and cautioning that a preoccupation with "'African identities" often occludes [the capacity of youth] to live productively *through* the fractured, experimental, and decidedly unfixed nature of what it means to be African in the world today' (2011a: xv). Nevertheless, he does acknowledge the importance of identity *formation*, however, and the fixing of meaning between self and other 'in an uncertain and fractured world' (ibid.: xiv) as crucial for understanding war today, particularly those efforts that debunk the primordialist narratives that dominate popular discussions in Africa. I subscribe to this perspective and further concur with Alden et al.'s assertion that it is important to understand armed groups (again in their case militias) as 'lucid, rational players operating within the international system who can successfully politicize and instrumentalize identity cleavages, not only for the mobilization of fighters in particular and society in general, but also for the retention of their support base' (2011: 25).

This perspective is even more relevant in relation to motivations for moving to fight between African countries, which is highly underdeveloped (important exceptions include Hoffman 2011a; Guichaoua 2009; Nilsson 2008; Utas 2003), and where for many researching the Mano River conflicts, movement motivations are mainly limited to mercenary (economic/greed) incentives (for instance, see International Crisis Group 2011, 2003a, 2003b, 2002; Silberfein and Conteh 2006; Human Rights Watch 2005; Global Witness 2003). Silberfein and Conteh, citing Utas (2003), note that 'Many of these fighters were initially abducted, but as they face a postconflict future without skills, education, family support, or even normal social development, they perceive that they have few options other than to continue fighting' (2006: 351). This factor is considered even more explicit in the case of child soldiers, who reportedly were re-recruited to fight in Côte d'Ivoire, by both government and opposition forces. Writing of the MRU sub-region, Pugh et al., considered the MRU sub-region in the late 1990s and early 2000s as a 'market for mercenaries' (2004: 121). They account for the 'general attractions of mercenary work' (ibid.: 122) as being the result of severe underdevelopment, problems with Sierra Leone's DDR process, lack of alternative economic opportunities, widespread poverty, and unresolved land disputes. This language is not limited to MRU conflicts. Speaking of Central African Republic, Debos,

even while emphasising the importance of understanding the historic roots of combatant mobilisation, refers to regional fighters as ‘freelance military entrepreneurs’ (2008: 225) and ‘regional warriors’ (ibid.: 240), a term coined by Human Rights Watch (2005: 11) for West Africa’s regional combatants.

Speaking of non-state armed groups generally, Henriksen and Vinci highlight three main fallacies that such analyses of non-state armed groups fall into:

First, they *essentialise* fighter motivation, leaving an impression that any motivation springs from singular causes or reasons. For instance, combat motivation might be said to come down to greed or grievance. Second, they *fail to recognise the polymorphous character of war*, and how changing motivations affect the contexts in question. For example, the nature of a war may change over its course, for instance beginning for communitarian reasons but turning into a warlord, criminal enterprise, and this can change the nature of combat motivation. Finally, they *confound agency and structure*, fallaciously explaining motivation exclusively with reference to the context, or on the other hand, explaining the context exclusively with reference to fighter motivation. (2007: 87–88; emphasis in the original)

In West Africa, the few studies that aim to avoid these pitfalls include Hoffman’s ‘War Machines’ thesis, yet even his anthropological study of MRU’s regional fighters prioritises an economic labour-based approach (Hoffman 2011a). Nilsson (2008), who uses the movement of Sierra Leonean combatants to Liberia as one of his case studies, also provides a useful departure. He proposes combining structural factors with actor-oriented explanations from the causes-of-war literature, and analysing the interaction between the three clusters of factors: re-marginalisation of ex-combatants after the cessation of conflict; the presence of remobilisers with the resources, capacity and will to organise subsequent conflict; and relationships – or shared social and material bonds (social networks) (2008: 15–16). Notwithstanding, many researchers and practitioners continue to interpret these postures within a narrow, mostly mercenary, framework, a shortcoming that this thesis hopes to address, while aiming to contribute new perspectives on regional combatants’ motivations at the micro level. In considering this in relation to international peace operations, it adopts a constructivist international relations approach (elaborated at the end of Chapter 4), being particularly interested in the strategic and tactical application of narratives by regional

combatants, and, for reasons that will become apparent in the next two chapters, the response narratives and resulting practices of regional peacebuilding institutions.

Another critique levelled at greed-grievance debates is that the regional dimension is hardly considered. As Pugh et al. note, '[r]egional dimensions hardly figure in the greed versus grievance debate, even though issues of local predation, distribution opportunities for resource exploitation, and borderland poverty and crime cannot be divorced from cross-border activities. However, there has been little attempt to incorporate the regional level in analyses of conflict – and even less in analyses of postconflict transformation' (2004: 23). One of the main purposes of this thesis is to contribute to redressing this oversight. The following chapter thus elaborates on the regional dimension, highlighting the importance of non-state actors such as regional combatants in such discussions, as well as relevant approaches to aid in this exercise.

3. Regional perspectives of peace and security

Inasmuch as UN peace operations have come to dominate in West Africa, the first efforts to address the conflicts in the different countries were made at regional level. Investigation of this process reveals much about the situation today and the limitations of prevailing approaches to regional peacebuilding. Section 3.1 provides an overview of the peacekeeping interventions by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), with Section 3.2 elaborating on its post-conflict contributions to maintaining peace and security. Section 3.3 considers the surprisingly scant theoretical underpinnings of these and subsequent interventions, with the exception of regional security/conflict complex theories, which helpfully point towards a social constructivist approach, but the application of which faces a myriad of problems in the West African context, stemming particularly from their focus on 'security' at the expense of 'region' and the absence of a focus on non-state actors. To redress this, Section 3.4 draws on new regionalism approaches to conflict and security, informed by political anthropology and social constructivist notions of borders and borderlands.

3.1. From internal conflict to regional response: the role of ECOWAS

In the 1990s the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone, which lacked geo-political significance on the international landscape, were largely ignored by the wider international community. It was instead left to ECOWAS to try and bring about lasting peace and security in the two countries. The regional body was formed in 1975 with a focus on economic cooperation and integration as a means of facilitating growth and development in West Africa. While security was not considered a priority, in 1978 and 1981, ECOWAS member states signed, respectively, the Protocol on Non-Aggression and the Protocol on Mutual Aid and Assistance for Defence. Importantly, the 1981 Protocol included provisions for ECOWAS intervention in cases of internal armed conflicts within a member state engineered and supported actively from outside and which were likely to endanger the peace and security of the entire community (Adebajo 2002a, 2002c). It was, however, the rise of intra-state conflict in the late

1980s and early 1990s, first in Liberia and then in Sierra Leone, that turned ECOWAS' attention towards regional security matters.

In 1990, Liberian President Samuel Doe invoked the 1981 ECOWAS Protocol following the invasion of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) from neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire. Fearing the contagion effects of the Liberian conflict, ECOWAS established a Standing Mediation Committee (SMC) to mediate the conflict and propose recommendations. The SMC proposed a peace plan, which included establishing a peacekeeping force. ECOWAS thus established the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), a first for an African sub-regional body at the time. Led by Nigeria, ECOMOG arrived in Liberia in August 1990 and quickly became another faction in an already fractured landscape. While some commentators put the ECOWAS intervention in Liberia down to Nigeria's hegemonic aspirations in the region, two other factors – humanitarian and regional security concerns – were also clearly relevant. Guinea and Sierra Leone were already hosting tens of thousands of Liberians seeking refuge from the war, and along with the Gambia, they also had dissident nationals fighting with the NPFL, so there was a real threat that NPFL success in Liberia could destabilise the governments in those countries, indeed as proved to be the case in Sierra Leone (Adebajo 2002c).

Critiqued for its lack of neutrality, unpreparedness (including insufficient military intelligence, logistics, funding and equipment, and an unclear hierarchy of control and understanding of objectives), unprofessionalism and lack of a unified approach, both among ECOWAS countries, some of whose governments openly supported Taylor, and within ECOMOG, the peacekeeping body's intervention in Liberia was ambiguous at best. The introduction of these troops into the Liberian conflict, and support for other fighting factions by both ECOMOG and neighbouring countries effectively resulted in a stalemate that kept Taylor at the negotiating table in the mid-1990s, but none of the agreements held and the country remained mired in conflict.

Reasons for the failure of initial negotiations include stipulations that fighting factions could not participate in transitional governments or elections; Taylor's suspicion of ECOMOG, which ensured lack of commitment to disarmament; the proliferation of fighting factions, some of which had been armed by ECOMOG against NPFL but which

subsequently became reluctant to give up control of territories from which they were exporting resources for personal profit; continued divisions within ECOWAS, and within ECOMOG about its mandate; and poor relations between Nigeria and western countries, particularly the United States, which ensured that adequate support for sub-regional efforts to resolve the conflict was not forthcoming. Problematic too was the nature of the successive interim governments, essentially set up and guaranteed by ECOMOG. These governing bodies' legitimacy was constantly called into question, and without an effective national army they were heavily reliant on ECOMOG for protection, and external guarantors for their longevity (Adebajo 2002c; Ofuatey-Kodjoe 2002). Nevertheless, after seven years ECOMOG was able to disarm Liberia's factions enough to organise elections in July 1997, in which fighting factions were allowed to participate, and which Charles Taylor won (Adebajo 2002b).

At the start of its campaign in Liberia, ECOMOG used Sierra Leone as a staging post for its operations, and the country even contributed troops to the force. In the wake of the 1991 RUF invasion of Sierra Leone from Liberia, with support from Taylor, several hundred ECOMOG troops were deployed to assist Sierra Leone in defending its capital (Adebajo 2002a). But ECOMOG's substantive involvement in Sierra Leone followed the May 1997 coup by the army junta, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). An alliance of ECOMOG/CDF troops was mobilised to recapture the capital Freetown and they returned the elected government to power in 1998. They also repelled the January 1999 invasion of Freetown by combined RUF and AFRC forces, but were unable to go any further. Still in control of large swathes of the country, during subsequent negotiations the rebels were bargaining from a position of strength, particularly from 1999, after Nigeria's newly elected President Obasanjo announced he would be withdrawing Nigerian troops from Sierra Leone within months.

Although some have argued that ECOMOG intervention and sloppy negotiating prolonged the conflict in Liberia and resulted in many civilian deaths in Sierra Leone, in both countries ECOMOG essentially served as a national armed force against rebel groups, when one did not exist in either country. It was a wholly West African enterprise, relying mostly on its own troops, money and military materiel, and represented the first time the UN sent military observers to support an already

established sub-regional force (Adebajo 2004). As the aspiring hegemon, Nigeria provided at least 80 percent of ECOMOG's troops (which totalled 16,000 in Liberia and 13,000 in Sierra Leone at their height) and 90 percent of its funding (Adebajo 2004). Further, leadership changes in the key nations, including the deaths of Houphouët-Boigny in 1993 (who, as a Taylor supporter, opposed ECOMOG's intervention in Liberia), and Nigeria's Abacha in 1998 (whose poor domestic political record precluded western support to ECOMOG) led to greater peacekeeping collaboration between countries in the region. Francophone countries became more involved in brokering peace agreements, and, eventually, contributing troops. This, along with increased commitments from the wider international community to support ECOMOG, peacekeeping efforts and peacebuilding activities, all afforded ECOMOG the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to ending the conflicts, including securing Liberia once Taylor left power in 2003, with a 3,600-strong ECOWAS Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL). ECOWAS further demonstrated its commitment to regional peacebuilding by deploying troops to Guinea-Bissau in 1998–1999, and to Côte d'Ivoire in 2003 (as the ECOWAS Peace Force for Côte d'Ivoire, ECOFORCE), following the eruption of conflict in that country the previous year (although these were largely funded and equipped by France and other western nations).

Despite moderate success, in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire it was apparent that ECOWAS did not have the capacity to bring the conflicts to a sustained end and build peace, resulting in western and UN peacekeeping intervention. The UN interventions, though superseding ECOWAS' efforts, did not, however, mean the end of the ECOWAS experiment with fostering peace and security in the region.

3.2. *ECOWAS transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding*

ECOWAS' peacekeeping efforts were increasingly accompanied by efforts to institutionalise peace and security considerations within ECOWAS. The earliest expression of this was the 1993 revision of the 1975 ECOWAS Treaty. This included a wide range of institutional reforms, covering law making, dispute settlement, jurisdictional reach and overall objectives; provisions for civil society and non-governmental organisation (NGO) participation; strengthened sanctions for non-

compliance; and an obligation for members to establish and strengthen collective security mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution (Kufuor 2006; Olonisakin and Levitt 1999). Article 58 related specifically to regional security, in which Member States agreed to co-operate to establish and strengthen appropriate mechanisms for the 'timely prevention and resolution of intra-State and inter-State conflicts', with provisions to establish joint commissions to address problems between states; encourage community-, town- and administrative-level exchanges; employ good offices to resolve disputes; organise regular meetings between relevant ministries; establish a regional peace and security observation system and peace-keeping as appropriate; and observe democratic elections, among others (ECOWAS 1993: 28).

The 1999 Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security was developed to implement provisions of Article 58 of the revised treaty. The Mechanism moved ECOWAS from its earlier ad hoc approach to collective security towards a coherent and institutionalised framework for security cooperation in the sub-region (Abass 2000) and aimed to improve cooperation in conflict prevention, early warning, peacekeeping operations and control of cross-border criminality, international terrorism and the proliferation of small arms (ECOWAS 1999). Provisions include the establishment of a Mediation and Security Council (to accelerate decision-making in crisis situations and implement provisions of the mechanism); a Defense and Security Commission (to advise the Mediation and Security Council on mandates, terms of reference and the appointment of force commanders, and to plan peacekeeping missions); and a Council of Elders (eminent personalities appointed to mediate conflicts and monitor elections, with up to 15 members, one nominated by each state). Further provisions include an observation and monitoring centre (an early warning system); a peace and security observation mechanism; an African strategic and peace research group; the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), a network of peacebuilding civil society organisations; and peacekeeping forces where necessary. To this end the protocol called for the establishment of a standby force of brigade size, to which each member state has pledged a battalion. This force now acts under the African Union's (AU) Africa Standby

Force architecture, and was deployed during the Mali crisis in 2012, in advance of the UN peacekeeping intervention.

The Protocol further enables the Community to initiate measures without seeking authorisation from the AU or UN Security Council, with provisions for informing them of such decisions. Measures are put into effect at the request of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State, the Mediation and Security Council, a member state, the AU, the UN, or at the initiative of the Executive Secretary. It also authorises ECOWAS to support political processes needed to restore political authority when the powers of government are absent or eroded, and to support electoral processes. Further, joint local/national commissions can be created to address problems between neighbouring states (Adebajo 2002a: 147–151; Aning 2004; Aning and Bah 2009; Kufuor 2006).

In addition to Mali, ECOWAS has invoked the Protocol in several other countries, including Togo and Guinea. According to Aning and Bah,

ECOWAS' key role in resolving the political crisis in Togo (2005) and Guinea (2007) was the most striking display of its ability to invoke its new instruments to deal with intra-state conflicts before they erupt. Unlike Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, where ECOWAS intervened to deal with the aftermath of violence, its engagement in Togo and Guinea was credited for averting the eruption of further violence in both countries. (2009: 4)

More recently, ECOWAS' preventive diplomacy was also credited for peaceful transfers of power as a result of popular protest in Burkina Faso (2014), and preventive diplomacy in the Gambia (2017). The region has also experienced numerous successful elections with peaceful transitions of power (including in Sierra Leone and Nigeria).

Beyond the 1999 Protocol, it is clear that security remains high on the regionalisation agenda, evidenced by the development and elaboration of frameworks and programmes such as the January 2008 ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF), which prioritises transnational and cross-border initiatives for 'natural resource governance, gender equality, humanitarian crisis prevention and preparedness, youth empowerment, and the fight against money laundering, drug and human trafficking and weapons proliferation' (ECOWAS 2008: 32). Together with violent extremism, the latter three factors are considered key challenges for West African security in the present day, and separate optional protocols have additionally been developed to address these. Further, the various mechanisms recognise the increasingly important

role of West African non-state actors in peace and security, especially youth, women and civil society, particularly given the historically weak state structures involved.

The preceding highlights the seemingly increasing impetus in ECOWAS as an institution for greater regional interaction, with its activities reflecting an ‘unprecedented’ emphasis on (regional) insecurity as a threat to states and a precondition of traditional development concerns (Bach 2004: 70). This move is not an isolated one, but rather one that is occurring within a broader framework of increasing regionalisation of peacekeeping and peacebuilding both in Africa and globally.

ECPF now sits within the wider African Union’s African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), which is ‘built around structures, objectives, principles and values, as well as decision-making processes relating to the prevention, management and resolution of crises and conflicts, post-conflict reconstruction and development in the continent’ (Kodjo 2012). On the other end of the scale, smaller regional bodies like Mano River Union (MRU) have developed strategies for the operationalisation of ECPF, such as the MRU Strategy for Cross-Border Security (2014). This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7. The consideration of MRU is an important one, because similar to ECOWAS, its member states – Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d’Ivoire – have consciously sought to recast it as a security complex, in a context wherein ‘a distinctive territorial pattern of security interdependence . . . exist[s] that marks off the members of a security complex from other neighbouring states’ (Buzan et al. 1998: 14; see below for discussion on security complexes). Established prior to ECOWAS, MRU was also established as a regional economic integration entity but it barely functioned (Grant 2008). Regardless, post-conflict, it has also focused on peace and security, in addition to economic development and social development imperatives.

Despite this extension of peace and security initiatives, numerous constraints may be still highlighted in relation to ECOWAS and related sub-regional initiatives. These constraints include a preoccupation with physical security, despite an increasingly people-centred approach and a focus on youth and women; an incomplete understanding of human security, and how this relates to physical and material security; and a lack of understanding about how (or even whether) to engage with the more dynamic or informal manifestations of West African regionalisation. Overarching

these constraints is the reality of the weak governance and state institutions that are trying to concurrently drive the supposedly twin processes of regional security and regional economic integration, which remains relatively limited. Related to this last point, Adebajo (2004), among others, has critiqued ECOWAS-style regionalism for a variety of limitations: a lack of coherent national development paradigms and an integration culture; the proliferation of intergovernmental organisations (such as the MRU) that are not coordinated with ECOWAS or one another; member-states' continued sacrifice of regional integration in the face of national crises; frequent political instability and conflict; the continued assertion of external influence and control (particularly France's determination to maintain West Africa as a sphere of influence); and a lack of proactive leadership. More generally, Pugh et al. note that while regional organisations may possess local knowledge and have more of a vested interest than international agencies who may be 'time-bound by exit strategies' (2004: 25), they may not be well-suited to conflict transformation because 'they exhibit dissension, are partial, or lack organizational competence' (ibid.), all concerns that may be ascribed to ECOWAS.

These constraints notwithstanding, ECOWAS' efforts have been strongly reinforced by the UN, including in the various UN Security Council resolutions establishing and renewing the mandates for UN peace operations in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL in 1999 and successor missions), Liberia (UNMIL, 2003), and Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI, 2004). In the case of UNAMSIL and UNOCI this included, respectively, authorisation for ECOMOG support to UNAMSIL with DDR (S/Res 1270 (1999)), and authorisation for ECOWAS troops together with French troops to remain in Côte d'Ivoire (S/Res 1528 (2004a), once UNOCI was established. In all three countries, the UN peace operations were mandated to work closely with ECOWAS on a range of peacebuilding activities, including implementation of the peace agreements; restoration of state authority; holding free and fair elections; security sector reform; and the implementation of various ECOWAS resolutions, protocols and plans in support of peace and security discussed above, particularly the 1998 Moratorium on Small Arms and Light Weapons (United Nations Security Council 2004a, 2004c, 2003c, 2003d).

ECOWAS' experiments with peacekeeping in internal conflicts and post-conflict arrangements have been the topic of widespread study and evaluation. They have not, however, benefited from significant theorising about the nature of regional peacekeeping. Few exceptions include the conceptualisation of West Africa's 'security complex' or 'regional conflict complex' (Adebajo and Rashid 2004: 5; Pugh et al. 2004). It is therefore worth spending some time on the basis of this conceptualisation and assessing its applicability for West Africa.

3.3. Theoretical perspectives of regional conflict and peace: regional security complex theory and its discontents

In various works, Adebajo refers to West Africa's 'security complex' (Adebajo 2004). Indeed, as the previous sections show, ECOWAS has made an explicit effort to reinvent itself as a regional security complex (RSC), stemming from its efforts to incorporate the lessons from its peacebuilding initiatives in the 1990s into institutionalised mechanisms for conflict management and peacebuilding. Regional security complexes may be distinguished from the system level interplay of the global powers, whose capabilities enable them to transcend distance, and the subsystem level interplay of lesser powers whose main security environment is their local region (Buzan and Wæver 2003). Buzan et al. (1998: 11) assert that the 'normal pattern of security interdependence in a geographically diverse, anarchic international system is one of regionally based clusters', which they label security complexes. They define an RSC as 'a set of states whose major security perceptions and concerns or both are so interlinked that their national security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another' (ibid.: 12). The flip side of this are 'regional conflict complexes' – 'transnational conflicts that form mutually reinforcing linkages with each other throughout a region, making for more protracted and obdurate conflicts' (Pugh et al. 2004: 24–25).

Related to ECOWAS' approach is Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), which explicitly addresses the relationships at and between the national, regional and international levels. It is a blend of materialist (neoliberal) and constructivist approaches, with Buzan et al. explicitly referencing the latter, in that it focuses on the

political processes by which security issues get constituted, and considers processes of securitisation to be open and subject to influence by a host of factors (Buzan and Wæver 2003). In this conceptualisation, '[s]ecurity' is . . . a self-referential practice, because it is in this practice that the issue becomes a security issue – not necessarily because a real existential threat exists but because the issue is presented as such a threat' (Buzan et al. 1998: 25). Thus its proponents assert that the way to study securitisation is to study discourse, noting however that a discourse that takes the form of presenting something as an existential threat (an object or ideal that is potentially harmful) to a referent object represents a securitising move, whereas the issue is only securitised if and when its audience accepts it as such. They refer to this process of securitisation as a 'speech act' (ibid.: 26) and note the possibility of studying who can 'do' or 'speak' security successfully, on what issues, under what conditions and with what effects (ibid.: 27).

There are several advantages of considering regional conflict and security complexes, not least because most other types of conflict analysis and responses are mostly concerned with 'the bounded state' (Pugh et al. 2004: 23). Interestingly, however, RSCT proponents do not consider entities such as ECOWAS as true RSCs but rather as proto-complexes, noting that few African regions have typical security complex-type threats wherein states can and do threaten others (Buzan 2007: 127). Also, in their view, the weak structures characterising most West African states make it difficult for them to constitute a permanent RSC, and the influence of outside powers in the region is sufficiently strong to suppress the normal operation of security dynamics among local states (Buzan et al. 1998). As demonstrated above, ECOWAS' effort to recast itself has not been straightforward, possibly as a consequence of these issues.

RSCT has its own share of criticism, however. These include its static view of a region as 'a spatially coherent territory composed of two or more states' (Buzan et al. 1998: 18–19). In this context, a region is no more than 'a world of multiple units' (ibid.) and regionalism is only interesting with regard to the ways in which the security logic of security sectors may or may not incline towards regionalisation (ibid.). As such, the regional aspect of the framework is severely under-theorised, with the focus being

squarely on security – security situations, security connectedness and security dilemmas (Buzan et al. 1998).

Indeed, I would argue for a stronger conceptualisation of ‘region’ in this framework, wherein regionalism is understood as ‘a multidimensional form of integration which includes economic, political, social and cultural aspects and thus goes far beyond the goal of creating region-based free trade regimes or security alliances’ (Hettne, quoted in Bach 2004: 69). As Bach notes, regionalisation may be ad hoc or institutionalised. This suggests a need to move away from traditional regime-centred security towards more people-centred approaches (Aning 2004) that place additional emphasis on the pluralistic and informal nature of contemporary regionalisation and enable and justify a focus on regional non-state actors, such as ex-combatants, whether as existential threats, securitising agents or indeed referent objects.

The balance of this chapter thus focuses on the conceptualisation of ‘region’ in relation to this thesis. It draws extensively on ‘new regionalisms’ approaches, which emphasise the role of non-state actors such as combatants as elaborated in the previous chapter, alongside national, regional and international actors.

3.4. *Towards a ‘new regionalisms’ approach to regional security*

In West Africa, like most of Africa, the carving out of territory during the colonial period created artificially drawn borders and fractured common kinship groups into different countries. While the region’s individual governments strive for a modern conceptualisation of the nation-state – including well-defined, exclusionary borders – they do this against a backdrop of poorly patrolled frontiers, ethnic loyalties that straddle multiple dividing lines, contested border areas, conflict, and informal regional strategies for survival. Concurrently, these same governments are involved in an ambitious exercise of integration which, as discussed above, has developed from economic concerns to address security issues as well.

Grant and Söderbaum (2003: 1) place the study of regionalism within the context of (constructivist) international relations (IR) and international political economy (IPE)

and argue that in the same way as state-centric notions have been transcended in IR and IPE, so must regionalism take on a new framework and focus less on formal and inter-state regional frameworks. They differentiate between regionalism and regionalisation: conventional regionalism is a generic, broad term, which refers to a general phenomenon. It can be considered as a set of objectives defined for a regional project aimed at establishing and preserving national and regional security in the broad sense (Bøås 2003). It relates to ‘the idea, ideology, politics and goals that seek to transform a geographical area into a clearly identified social space’ (Grant and Söderbaum 2003: 1) and speaks to the construction of an identity, driven by formal arrangements that are institutional or state-centric but does not take into account the dynamic reality of regionalisation, often driven by non-state actors. Indeed, regionalisation by contrast implies a dynamic element that ‘can occur unintentionally, without actors necessarily being conscious of or dedicated to regionalism’ (ibid: 7), and is driven by a host of factors. For analytical purposes, therefore, we are urged to ‘separate between a formal type of regionalisation, which is led, supported and facilitated by states, and an informal variant of regionalisation, which is created by non-state actors and operates in the nexuses between formal and informal political economies’ (Bøås et al 1999, quoted in Bøås 2003: 35).

In Africa particularly, the ‘state-society nexus is based on multiple actors that are linked together in hybrid networks and coalitions, together creating a wide range of complex regionalization patterns on the continent’ (Grant and Söderbaum 2003: 1). Grant and Söderbaum (2003) elaborate on a ‘new regionalisms⁸ approach’ (NRA) that places additional emphasis on the pluralistic and informal nature of contemporary regionalisation. The macro (or institutional and state level) is important, but micro factors, including civil society and other citizen-centred factors, are also relevant. In their view regionalism should be considered as a ‘heterogeneous, comprehensive, multi-dimensional phenomenon, taking place in several sectors and often “pushed” . . . by a variety of actors (state, market and society)’ (Bøås 2003). It takes a reflectivist

⁸ This is variously referred to as New Regionalisms and the New Regionalism approach. Here I have purposely used New Regionalisms, to emphasise the multiplicity of actors and impetuses are at work in West African regionalism.

approach, which considers regions as social constructions (Söderbaum and Taylor 2008a: 20).

Grant and Söderbaum's understanding of NRA makes allowance for the fact that not all regionalisation is automatically beneficial or positive – it may be 'conflictual, exploitative, reinforce a particular power relation or create other negative effects' (Grant and Söderbaum 2003: 6–7). For instance, parallel or illegal cross-border transactions are an important source of income for parties involved and can further regionalisation, but the benefits only accrue to a few, rob governments of much needed revenue, and they can become dangerous and destabilising (Francis, 2001) – the cross-border trafficking of small arms for instance is a case in point (Murithi 2005). Such regional networks of greed and plunder (MacLean 2003) find a natural home in areas of conflict, benefiting from, and in some cases driving, insecurity and violence (Bach 2003; Ihederu 2003). Ihederu concludes that on the one hand, new actors, institutions and other forms of regional interaction support neo-liberal agendas, but, on the other hand, pressures from below 'undermine the ideological and practical basis of the state and free market liberalism and, consequently, the very architecture of an integrated regional polity and economy' (2003: 51).

These definitions allow that regionalisation can be built through patterns of interaction that challenge both state territorial control and regional policies. This is not always to the detriment of state-led processes, however. Bach (2003) acknowledges the potential complementarities that non-state regionalisation can provide to state-led approaches. For Bach (2003:23), 'In Africa, regionalization is powerfully shaped by the strategies of state and non-state agents; the latter... can 'contribute to consolidate and enhance state-centric patterns of regionalisation'. Accordingly, non-state actors, or 'regionalisation from below', can 'complement, substitute or subvert the state' (Ihederu 2003: 47). This perspective thus allows that those interactions that challenge state territorial control and regional agendas can, at the same time, bring about increasing regionalisation. An example of this are cross-border [ethnic and commercial] networks that simultaneously integrate West African peoples and may generate new forms of cultural identity, while constituting serious threats to the state and the creation of a free market society (Ihederu 2003:65).

Like Bach (2003: 23), I hypothesise that in sub-Saharan Africa, regionalisation, and by extension the prospects for regional peace and security, is powerfully shaped by the strategies of both state and non-state agents. Moreover, this process necessitates an understanding of the motivations of those who carry out the day-to-day activities that indicate greater regionalisation – the individuals and groups that manifest informal regionalisation but are not really studied as such.

The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to this area of investigation, and allow a more nuanced look at regionalisation by non-state actors (in this case regional combatants), the efforts of regional governance and peacebuilding (including state, regional and international approaches) to mitigate these, and the extent to which these mitigation measures have understood the regionalisation imperatives and potentials of such non-state actors. In so doing, the thesis does not automatically assume that regional combatant movements comprise ‘negative regionalisation’ and efforts to contain them ‘positive regionalisation’.

While there is much in the new regionalisms approach that this thesis subscribes to I must note some points of departure. One is its close association with neo-patrimonialism (Söderbaum and Taylor 2008). Neo-patrimonialism is concerned with informalised state and political power and the distribution of scarce resources through patronage networks. It combines, to various degrees, ‘differentiation and lack of separation between public and private spheres... privatised extraction and redistribution along regional, ethnic and family lines. Power is personal, business is politics, the state is both simultaneously strong and weak’ (Bøås 2003:32).

While this is one useful lens, such an approach in the African context has the danger of falling back into the trap of focusing on state-centred approaches in that even while it highlights the informal nature of the state, it may obscure a focus on those who fall between the cracks and who are not able to benefit from neo-patrimonial networks, even as they manoeuvre to take advantage of regional opportunities to overcome this lack of access.

Further, as noted above, NRA is closely associated with an IPE approach. Consequently, studies of regional conflict using this framework tend to focus on the political economy

of conflict. This includes, again as noted above, increasing cross-border [micro]-regional flows of licit and illicit goods and persons (Grant 2008). Such approaches refer to a 'new geography of conflict... in which resource flows rather than political or ideological divisions constitute the major fault lines' (Grant, 2008:114).

As valid as these views are, they result in a framing that is primarily in economic and fiscal terms – so even as they critique conventional regionalism and formal processes, studies about the relationship between regionalisation and conflict may also limit the debate to a focus on the dividend of insecurity and violence. In these renderings, the primary actors are warlords and others able to take advantage of war economies and border porosity to pursue their agendas. Although in opposition to the state, often, they display similarly predatory antics that characterise the neo-patrimonial state. In a way, as with the neo-patrimonialism lens, these debates remain state-centric, albeit concerned about its failure or deinstitutionalisation (Bach, 2003: 29). In contrast, I am most interested in an analysis that genuinely considers 'regionalisation from below', or 'regionalisation from the bottom', as it were – that is, from the perspectives of those who day to day carry out the activities that indicate greater regionalisation. This could include citizens of one country who farm, school and access healthcare and markets in neighbouring countries; individual farmers who sell their rice to communities across the border; or cattle traders who herd their cattle to the closest major market, without regard for whether that market is within their own, or a neighbouring, country's borders, all activities I observed during my fieldwork (see Chapters 7). Or, in the case I am proposing, fighters who export the craft they learnt at home to neighbouring countries as opportunities arise. In this context, regional combatants could therefore be considered as pressures 'from below' who, through their transnational movement on the one hand exhibit hyper-regional interaction, but on the other hand undermine state-led regionalism projects that seemingly require regional peace and stability.

As Chapter 7 demonstrates, this approach is usefully applied in the context of borderlands and micro-regions which, as Söderbaum and Taylor (2008: 13) note, are increasingly cross-border in nature. Micro-regions 'represent the degrees of agency that Africans operationalise on a day-to-day basis. They can represent diverse strategies that non-state players utilise to survive in a difficult world' (Söderbaum and

Taylor 2008: 13)). Similarly, borderlands literature expands on the agency of 'borderlanders' (Donnan and Wilson 2010) who have 'designed a range of 'borderland tactics' to provide the security they need to keep their border communities alive and well (ibid.: 16), recognising that their borderlands have 'social, political, economic, cultural and territorial meanings' unto themselves (ibid.: 9). As such, the anthropology of borderlands 'is an anthropology of nations and states, among other social and political entities, as they are experienced at local levels. These experiences are very often indicative of highly contentious areas of identity, sovereignty and security that are of daily significance in the borderlands, but also have import elsewhere' (Donnan and Wilson 2010: 13), requiring ongoing investigation of the ways in which 'nations and states, governments and NGOs, and political and civil society negotiate their arrangements with each other' (ibid.).

This chapter began with an overview of regional entities' efforts to address the conflicts in the MRU region, which they construed as a threat to their efforts to formalise regional integration. Post-conflict, peace and security issues have continued to dominate their regionalist agendas, with some (limited) recognition of the importance of informal regionalisation processes. At the same time, however, they have ceded the bulk of peacebuilding efforts to the larger international community, particularly the United Nations. This necessitates an exploration of the underlying theories of these peace efforts, the topic of the next chapter, which also begins to discuss their implications for regional peacebuilding, before bringing together the strands of literature examined from Chapters 2 to 4 in a multi-layered framework within which the thesis is set.

4. International and regional peacebuilding in practice and theory

As noted in previous chapters UN peace operations became the main driving force of consolidating peace in the MRU countries, which showcased the increasingly expansive character of peace operations. This chapter examines the evolution of international peacekeeping into multidimensional peacebuilding alongside its theoretical frameworks (Section 4.1), and in relation to attendant peace operations; its prospects for engendering regional security (Section 4.2), and critiques on the same (Section 4.3). This represents the third 'leg' of my multi-layered approach, and as such the chapter discusses new directions for peacebuilding theory and analysis, culminating in the framework that guides the remainder of this thesis (Section 4.4).

4.1. From 'traditional' peacekeeping to 'multidimensional' peacebuilding

The United Nations (UN) has primary responsibility for maintaining global peace and security, and 'peacekeeping' has become one of its primary instruments for achieving this goal. The UN derives its peacekeeping⁹ mandate from the UN Charter: Chapter VI outlines mechanisms for the 'peaceful settlement of disputes', while Chapter VII provides for armed response, including 'action with respect to threats to the peace, breaches of the peace, and acts of aggression' (article 42 of the UN Charter, (The United Nations 1945)).

During the Cold War period, however, the UN was severely constrained in fulfilling its key functions, as the opposing Cold War superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, played out their rivalry in the chambers of the UN Security Council as two of its five permanent members, responsible for authorising UN armed engagement.¹⁰ Between 1948, when the first peace operation, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), was established in the Middle East, and the eve of the end of

⁹ As observers like to note, the term 'peacekeeping' it does not appear in the UN Charter, and conceptually falls somewhere in between Chapters VI and VII of the UN Charter.

¹⁰ Chapter VII of the UN Charter requires a resolution to be carried without a veto from the five permanent members of Security Council.

the Cold War in 1987, the UN undertook just 13¹¹ peacekeeping missions (Boutros-Ghali 1992).

Riding on a wave of optimism resulting from the end of the Cold War, in 1992 the Security Council tasked Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali with reviewing the way in which the UN's capacity for preventive diplomacy, peace-making and peacekeeping could be strengthened within the framework and provisions of the UN Charter (Boothby and D'Angelo 2004; Boutros-Ghali 1992). This resulted in the report titled *An Agenda for Peace*. It defined five central aims of international action to prevent or control conflicts: early warning and preventative diplomacy; peace-making to resolve issues that led to conflict; peacekeeping to preserve peace where fighting has halted and implement peace agreements; peacebuilding assistance through rebuilding institutions and infrastructures; and addressing the deepest causes of conflict – economic despair, social justice and political oppression (Boutros-Ghali 1992). It also asserted that the time for 'absolute and exclusive sovereignty' (Boutros-Ghali 1992: 4) had passed, recommended the utilisation of 'peace enforcement units' in clearly defined circumstances, and emphasised cooperation with regional arrangements, as referenced in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter (Security Council Report 2006).

In the mid-1990s, however, UN peace operations faced severe criticism, both internally and externally. Member States resisted the expanded notion of peacekeeping as detailed in *An Agenda for Peace*, which required a varied, multifaceted response, with complex interventions aimed at addressing the root causes of conflict, and included deployment in internal conflicts where non-state groups had no interest or commitment to the goals of the UN or its peacekeeping missions. The failed peacekeeping intervention in Somalia, resulting in the UN's withdrawal in 1993 after the deaths of Pakistani and American troops, and the UN's failure to prevent the Rwanda genocide in 1994, subjected the UN to further criticism. Furthermore, the

¹¹ In contrast, between 1988 and 2015, the UN undertook a further 54 operations; in 2016 there were 16 active operations, more than there were during the entire Cold War period.

UN's 'preventive diplomacy' approach appeared to be failing as conflicts continued to rage in numerous regions and countries, including Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Partly in response, in 2000 UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan commissioned a high-level international panel on UN peace operations to review and recommend changes to UN peacekeeping. The resulting Brahimi Report, named after the chairman of the panel, has had a profound effect on the way UN peacekeeping has operated since. It initiated major reforms that have enabled the surge in UN peace operations and subsequent UN reform (United Nations 2012). A fundamental premise was ensuring that UN peacekeeping forces were fit for purpose, including, if necessary, capacity for military units to defend themselves, other mission components, and their mission's mandates. The report tasked the Secretariat with developing robust doctrine, and the Security Council with ensuring realistic mandates. It further recommended strengthened capacity for information management and strategic analysis; improved mission guidance and leadership; rapid deployment capacity (30 days for traditional and 90 days for complex peacekeeping operations) and on-call expertise; enhanced Headquarters capacity to plan and support peace operations; the establishment of Integrated Task Forces for mission planning and support; and adapting missions to the information age.

Since then, the core functions of UN multidimensional peacekeeping have been articulated in a key guidance text, *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines*, or the 'Capstone Doctrine', published in 2008. This document regards peacekeeping as 'a technique designed to preserve the peace, however fragile, where fighting has been halted, and to assist in implementing agreements achieved by the peacemakers' (UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations 2008: 19). It also distinguishes between 'traditional' peacekeeping operations, which are deployed as an interim measure to help manage a conflict and create conditions in which the negotiation of a lasting settlement can proceed (ibid.: 21), and a new generation of 'multidimensional' peacekeeping operations, which are 'typically deployed in the dangerous aftermath of a violent internal conflict and may employ a mix of military, police and civilian capabilities to support the implementation of a comprehensive peace' (ibid.: 22). Each of the peacekeeping operations in West Africa – UNAMSIL in

Sierra Leone, UNMIL in Liberia and UNOCI in Côte d'Ivoire (and, since 2013, MINUSMA in Mali) – could be considered quintessential multidimensional operations, embodying most of the features that typify UN peace operations today.

These reform efforts notwithstanding, numerous critiques of peace operations remain. These include the UN's managerial approach, which prevents adequate conceptualisation of peace operations within international politics, resulting in a lack of engagement with systemic structural causes of conflict and a lack of understanding of what security would mean in a given context (Higate and Henry 2009). Despite demonstrating evolved thinking, reviews and resulting documents such as *Agenda for Peace* and the Brahimi Report did not put forward suggestions for new thinking about peace operations, even as critics questioned the 'underlying norms, values and beliefs' upon which peace operations were based (ibid.: 9). Chief among these norms was the idea that liberal democracy (with the ubiquitous 'free and fair elections') was the desired end state for post-conflict states, and in fact 'a necessary prerequisite for achieving long-term peace and security' (ibid.: 11). As such, peace operations uncritically initiate and reinforce the existing neoliberal order, and 'the design and conduct of peacekeeping missions reflect not only the interests of key parties and perceived lessons of previous operations, but also the prevailing norms of global culture, which legitimize certain kinds of peacekeeping policies and delegitimize others' (Paris 2003: 443, quoted in Higate and Henry 2009: 11).

Other problems relate to the lack of a long-term perspective. As Chapter 8 will elaborate, despite longer-term missions, planning for peace operations within the UN system is predicated on short time frames (at most annual mandates) with rigid planning, budgeting and reporting deadlines. While this permits continuous, rigorous monitoring, at least in theory, in management terms it encourages 'business as usual'.

In an effective summary of associated shortcomings, Fortna notes:

The problems with peacekeeping are legion. Peacekeeping missions are often thrown into conflicts when the great powers want to be seen as 'doing something' but do not really want to act. Mission mandates are often ambiguous, reflecting the lowest common denominator of agreement among sending states and among the belligerents themselves. Peace operations are usually improvised and ad hoc; they are too often planned at the last minute and are perennially understaffed, underfunded and

underequipped . . . Troop levels are based on what member states are willing to provide, not on a realistic assessment of need. (2008: 76)

Fortna (2008) further argues that the literature on peacekeeping is surprisingly underdeveloped theoretically, with opponents dismissing peacekeeping as irrelevant, and proponents listing its functions and practices with 'little discussion of how the presence of peacekeepers might influence the prospects for peace' (2008: 2). She argues that 'little theoretical work has been done to specify what peacekeepers do to help belligerents maintain a cease-fire, or how peacekeepers might shape the choices made by the peacekept about war and peace' (ibid.). She further notes, 'most existing studies of peacekeeping focus almost exclusively on the perspective of the peacekeepers or the international community. In the discussions of mandates, equipment and personnel, relations among national contingents or between the field and headquarters, and so on, it is easy to lose track of the fundamental fact that it is the belligerents themselves who ultimately make decisions about maintaining peace or resuming the fight' (ibid.: 2–3). As such, she argues that '[o]nly by considering the perspective of the peacekept – their incentives, the information available to them, and their decision making – can we understand whether and how peacekeeping makes a difference' (ibid.: 3). She concludes that our current understanding of peacekeeping suffers from three gaps: 'we know too little about whether or how much peacekeepers contribute empirically to lasting peace, we lack a solid understanding of the causal mechanisms through which peacekeepers affect the stability of peace, and we know too little about the perspective of the peacekept on these matters' (ibid.). These are all issues with which this thesis is concerned.

Higate and Henry (2009) have similar concerns. While noting that peacekeeping theory and literature has provided a wealth of information and generated much debate about the relative success or failure of peacekeeping and how to make it more effective, including when and how to intervene and the legality of doing so, resourcing, operational and organisational issues, rules of engagement, conflict resolution, etc., it has done this 'largely overlooking its social face' (Higate and Henry 2009: 8). They are concerned that '[s]ociological, anthropological and post-structural approaches to peacekeeping remain underutilized at the expense of macro-level political science or

international relations theorizing' (ibid.: 16) which precludes a necessary focus on the perspectives of host populations and those employed in missions.

Doyle and Sambanis concur, noting that 'peacekeeping can only be as credible as the peacekeepers' mandate and resources, and effective peacekeeping must be able to adapt to the particularities of the civil wars they are sent to resolve' (2006: 49). Further, '[w]ell-chosen strategies can maximize the available space for peace, whereas strategies that are poorly matched to the conflict at a particular time can reduce the space for peace' (ibid.: 51).

One of the most significant efforts to address some of the criticisms outlined above has involved the effort to consider UN post-conflict peacekeeping more holistically. One aspect of this has been the move away from the relatively narrow nomenclature of peacekeeping operations to 'peace operations', in explicit recognition of the fact that peacekeeping necessarily encompasses a much broader scope than envisioned at its genesis. The most recent review of UN Peacekeeping Operations was the 2015 High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO), headed by President José Ramos-Horta, which released a 111-page report containing over 100 recommendations. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon subsequently distilled this into a report for the General Assembly and Security Council, outlining priorities for 'peace operations.' The report notes this term refers to 'all field-based peace and security operations mandated or endorsed by the Security Council and/or the General Assembly, including peacekeeping operations and special political missions, as well as the envoys and regional offices' and was deliberately used to 'capture the holistic and tailored way in which United Nations peace and security tools must be used if we are to achieve better and more sustained effect' (General Assembly, Security Council, 2015: 3).¹² The priorities included: pursuit of negotiated political settlements;

¹² The terms peacekeeping has mostly been used thus far in this thesis. This is because the operations have commonly been known as peacekeeping, even while it is recognised that multidimensional operations undertake a whole range of other activities, including peacebuilding. From this point, however, I will subscribe to the recent convention of referring to 'peace operations' to reference the spectrum of operations summarised above. Nonetheless, as the title of both the thesis and this chapter suggest and as the next few paragraphs elaborate, the thesis will be specifically concerned with the broader range of activities that fall under the umbrella *peacebuilding*, thus this term will be used explicitly, as contextualised below.

protection of civilians; tailored and appropriate responses; global–regional partnerships, including standing arrangements and procedures and burden sharing, especially with African countries; and renewed focus on prevention and mediation.

Another aspect of this holistic approach has been the increased focus on ‘peacebuilding’ in parallel with peace operations. The UN’s contemporary definition of peacebuilding involves

a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development. Peacebuilding is a complex, long-term process of creating the necessary conditions for sustainable peace. It works by addressing the deep-rooted, structural causes of violent conflict in a comprehensive manner. Peacebuilding measures address core issues that [a]ffect the functioning of society and the State, and seek to enhance the capacity of the State to effectively and legitimately carry out its core functions. (UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations 2008: 18)

Also in 2015, the Secretary-General nominated an Advisory Group of Experts to review the peacebuilding architecture. The resulting Security Council resolution 2282 (2016) (United Nations Security Council 2016a) drew on the report to understand ‘sustaining peace’ as a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account, which encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development (ibid: 1-2). It recognised peacebuilding as ‘an inherently political process aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, recurrence or continuation of conflict, and further recognizing that peacebuilding encompasses a wide range of political, developmental, and human rights programmes and mechanisms’ (ibid: 2).

Of relevance to this thesis, accompanying the move towards peacebuilding is the articulated importance of a regional approach. Resolution 2282 further welcomed the contribution of peacekeeping operations and peacekeepers to peacebuilding and, among others, stressed the importance of partnership between the UN and relevant regional and sub-regional organisations ‘to improve cooperation and coordination in peacebuilding, to increase synergies and ensure the coherence and complementarity of such efforts’ (ibid: 6).

Regions have long been recognised as both a blessing and a curse for international peacebuilding efforts in domestic conflicts. An *Agenda for Peace* highlighted the potential roles for regional organisations in peace and security, and birthed the concept of a 'regional-global security partnership' (Security Council Report 2006: 2). Subsequently, the Brahimi Report highlighted 'the significant cross-border effects by State and non-State actors', which often rendered supposedly intra-State conflicts decidedly transnational in nature, and the importance of 'active political, logistical and/or military support of . . . major regional powers to peace operations' (Panel on United Nations Peace Operations 2000: 3). Subsequent to the report, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1327 (2000) that included 'the importance of cooperation with regional and sub-regional organisations from early stages in negotiations' among others (United Nations Security Council 2000b).

The UN Charter recognises the role of regional bodies in peace and security in Chapter VIII. This includes encouraging the development of pacific settlement of local disputes through regional arrangements or regional agencies, either on the initiative of the states concerned or by reference from the Security Council. Any action must, however, be subordinate to the United Nations. Indeed, the UN is increasingly engaged in joint ventures with regional organisations, 'for reasons such as geographic proximity, expediency, burden-sharing and others' (Artiñano 2012: 1). Africa has been a particular focus for regional cooperation with the UN, stemming from ECOWAS intervention discussed in the previous chapter. For instance, the Summit Outcome Document of September 2005 endorsed a ten-year capacity-building programme for the AU, and in September 2005, the Security Council adopted resolution 1625 on strengthening cooperation between the UN and regional organisations, which recognised the need to develop an effective partnership between the Council and the AU. In January 2012, the Council adopted resolution 2033 with particular emphasis on the AU, and encouraged 'the improvement of regular interaction, consultation and coordination, as appropriate, between the Council and the AU PSC' (ibid.: 1).

Recently, and up to the present, the AU (and its subsidiary sub-regional organisations) and the UN have cooperated in peace operations and peace negotiations in Burundi, Chad, Somalia, Darfur, Central African Republic, Mali and South Sudan. In Darfur, a

hybrid AU-UN force for Darfur (UNAMID) was established in December 2006, then a completely new idea in global peace operations, while the Security Council approved the establishment of the AU-led African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in 2012, which is supported by a UN special political mission, the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM); logistics for both are managed by United Nations Support Office for the African Union Mission in Somalia (UNSOA). This collaborative approach has also been in evidence with the MRU countries, which in fact provided several precedents: in 1993, the Security Council established the UN Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), which was the first time the UN co-deployed military observers with a peacekeeping operation established by another organisation, namely ECOWAS. In 2003, the ECOWAS/French peace operation in Côte d'Ivoire was the first of its kind to be endorsed by the UN Security Council as a Chapter VIII peacekeeping operation.

These initiatives are not without their shortcomings, however. This includes the ongoing ad hoc nature of the arrangements, including for funding, especially given the typical lack of resources African regional organisations face regarding equipment, logistics and personnel (United Nations Security Council 2014b). In 1994 Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali labelled the 'new regionalism' as a challenge, noting that regional entities could enhance the efficiency and the effectiveness of UN efforts for peace and further democratise the international system, but 'the very features that make regional entities effective may also make regional involvement seem threatening. Those close to a problem and well equipped to handle it may also be too close to its living historical associations: in short, regional involvement may raise the old fears of regional hegemony and intervention' (quoted in Henrikson 1996: 62). Nonetheless, it is clear that regional organisations are to have an increasing role in peacekeeping operations, as well as to restoring peace, security and stability, alongside the UN.

Given the various gaps in peacekeeping practice and theory highlighted above, it is necessary to consider the extent to which peacebuilding theory and practice have anticipated and addressed the concerns. The following section elaborates on this, highlighting further gaps in the peacebuilding literature, before Section 4.3 articulates my framework, which aims to address some of these gaps.

4.2. *Limitations of contemporary peacebuilding theory*

Thanks to early theorists such as Galtung, it is widely recognised that peace is more than the ‘absence of violence, absence of war’ (Galtung 1964: 2), or an explanation of why a period of violence comes to an end. Heathershaw (2007: 19) argues that peacebuilding is ‘a contested concept which gains meaning as it is practiced’. He notes further that ‘it is *a complex and ‘intersubjective process of change entailing the legitimisation of new relationships of power’* (ibid., emphasis mine). He concludes that in a given peacebuilding environment, there are a ‘multiplicity of discourses at play’ (ibid.: 21) and that understanding these and their cultural context results in a richer understanding of peacebuilding. Critics argue, however, that built as it is on a ‘liberal peace’ thesis, contemporary peacebuilding ‘applies a standardised liberal social model that is insensitive to local contexts, disempowers local communities and in practice has delivered poor-quality outcomes characterised by superficial democratisation, entrenched corruption and worsening socio-economic inequalities’ (Selby 2013: 58, quoted in Leib 2016: 36). This thesis aims to interrogate this perspective, which resonates with the critiques elaborated on above and below. It aims to shed light on the various bottom-up and top-down discourses at play, similarly arguing that better understanding of these and their cultural (particularly in this case, regional) context would not only lead to better understanding but also better peacebuilding outcomes.

A significant critique of contemporary peacebuilding theory and analysis is made by Autesserre (2010; 2014). She notes that most studies ‘usually develop large-scale analyses that afford little sense to how peacebuilding actually operates in the field’, focusing on macro-level variables while ignoring the micro-level (2010: 15). She notes that resulting analysis on peacebuilding failure tends to settle on two sets of explanations, based either on economic, political, legal, security or contextual constraints or vested economic, political, security, or institutional interests. Such explanations do not provide sufficient theoretical understanding of ‘whether, how, or why the existing constraints and interests lead international actors to prioritize certain peacebuilding strategies’ (Autesserre 2010: 16). She advocates for international interventions and their processes to be viewed through the lens of a ‘dominant

peacebuilding culture' (ibid.: 22). In her study on Congo, she found that this culture accordingly shaped constraints and interests, as well as international understanding of violence and intervention (ibid.: 23). She focuses on peacebuilding actors in the field and their 'shared cultural and normative understanding' (ibid.: 26), which encourages them to adopt similar intervention strategies in a given situation. She shows 'how the dominant peacebuilding culture constitutes specific actors . . . , identities . . . , interests . . . , and assumptions that are taken as truths' and which together 'define "legitimate or desirable goals" for the actors to pursue', (ibid.: 30) authorising and enabling specific practices and policies while precluding others. She further notes that 'explaining how culture influences action in the field also requires a consideration of *all* the peacebuilders involved in a postwar setting' (ibid.: 29, emphasis mine) from Security Council members all the way down to field-based peacebuilders.

Autesserre presents a related thesis in *Peaceland*, which aims to explain why international peace interventions often fail to reach their full potential, although in this case she focuses almost exclusively on the 'everyday' of peacebuilding by field-based actors. She uses three concepts – practices, habits and narratives – and demonstrates how their application by peacebuilders enables 'inefficient, ineffective and counterproductive elements to persist . . . even when intervenors know these modes of operation are inefficient and at times harmful' (Autesserre 2014: 36), partly because they enable interveners to function in the field. She demonstrates further how the structure of inequality in the international peacebuilding system generates power asymmetries between external interveners and local stakeholders, and shapes the perceptions of local people (ibid.: 40). Their efforts are also harmful because they do not promote local ownership, thus decreasing the effectiveness of international efforts. These are perspectives that I find have currency in relation to regional peacebuilding.

Autesserre builds on Sending, who asserts that peacebuilding suffers from a lack of respect for local ownership and insensitivity to local context, stemming from assumptions that 'universal features and mechanisms of the liberal peacebuilding is more important than geographically specific knowledge', which makes peacebuilders blind to local factors that are critical for peacebuilding (Sending 2009: 1).

Specifically in relation to addressing regional conflict, Ohanyan notes that theories have largely evolved to explain or assess peace operations and as such prioritise 'organizational levels of analysis' instead of the 'broader political underpinnings of conflict processes and intervention strategies' (Ohanyan 2015: 2). Pugh et al. (2004) similarly argue that regional dimensions are poorly articulated in the political economy literature, with little attempt to incorporate the regional level in analyses of conflict and post-conflict transformation. Relatedly, Doyle and Sambanis (2006) observe that '[a]n important gap in the literature is the lack of analysis of the links between international and internal war . . . to date, we do not have an integrated analysis of the regional dimensions of civil war, except in studies that analyze one type of war (i.e., either interstate or intrastate) while controlling for the occurrence of other types of war.' While this has changed somewhat (earlier references to Hoffman (2007, 2011a, 2011b) and Pugh et al. (2004) are cases in point), this remains an underdeveloped area of study. The result is potentially obscuring 'the greater complexity and diversity of actors and interest groups' (Ohanyan 2015: 5). Furthermore, a 'statist model of delivery . . . [also] underestimates the interconnections across borders in the formal and particularly the informal economies that underpin many conflicts' (Pugh et al. 2004: 23). Pugh et al. note further that while regional dimensions are addressed at the level of 'high politics in arranging cease-fires and peace settlements . . . the regional dimension . . . often seems to evaporate at the level of economic intervention and postconflict transformation' (ibid.).

Thus, although there has been significant theorising about why wars break out, their duration, and factors affecting their termination (as discussed to some extent in the previous chapter), our knowledge of the conditions that lead to successful peacebuilding, or the best ways to achieve post-conflict peace remains limited (Leib 2016). The next section accordingly outlines the framework that aims to contribute to a better understanding of peacebuilding, using peacebuilding efforts to address cross-border conflict as a case study. It is derived from the gaps identified immediately above as well as the two preceding chapters, in relation to combatant motivations, new regionalisms and regional peacebuilding.

4.3. My conceptual framework: towards a regional peacebuilding theory

My central research question, posed in Chapter 1, is: **Why were international peacebuilding efforts ineffective in addressing the phenomenon of regional combatants, which contributed to the spread of regional conflict in the Mano River Union sub-region of West Africa?**

This question is asked in the context of the spread of conflict from Liberia to Sierra Leone in 1991; the participation of Sierra Leonean combatants in Liberia's resumed conflict in 2001; Liberian and Sierra Leonean combatants' participation in Côte d'Ivoire's conflict from 2002; and Liberian fighters' participation in the Ivorian 2010–2011 post-election violence. The previous chapters have demonstrated the limitations of prevailing ex-combatant, regional security and international peacebuilding approaches in addressing this question. Particularly, peacekeeping and peacebuilding theory are often critiqued for not taking into consideration the perspectives of the 'peacekept' (Fortna 2008: 2) as well as the practices of on-the-ground peacebuilders (Autesserre 2014). While there has been a lot of research and resulting literature on the micro-level, including on ex-combatants as demonstrated in Chapter 2, this has mostly been in relation to the causes-of-war literature or conflict termination; few try to put this in the context of peacebuilding theory (indeed, the few exceptions include Fortna 2008).

In relation to peacekeeping and peacebuilding practices, researchers have mostly focused on the organisational aspects of mandate-making at Security Council level, including when and how to deploy, logistical and human capital capacities, and so on. Welcome exceptions to such studies include Higate and Henry (2009) and Autesserre (2014) but even these focus almost exclusively on one set of actors – on-the-ground peacebuilders. Yet, even as Autesserre aims to justify a focus on 'field-based interveners' (Autesserre 2014: 39) she observes that their actions are based on '[i]nstructions from the top' (ibid.: 25), albeit interpreted and translated for the local context; that 'local leaders of peacekeeping operations must translate any new mandate they receive into a series of concrete tasks for implementation' (ibid.); and

she asserts that there is a 'wide divide' (ibid.: 26) between capitals and field offices and different priorities, as well as understandings of and potential solutions to problems. This suggests the significance of considering the spectrum of peacebuilders, from decision-makers at headquarters, to the interpreters of these decisions in host country capital cities, to field-based implementers. Further, in relation to regional dimensions, peacekeeping and peacebuilding theories have remained largely state-centric even when, as Ohanyan (2015) observes, conflicts have an overtly regional dimension.

In order to address these shortcomings and address my question, I propose a research agenda that advances the following three themes and related concepts:

- (i) Regional conflict as a function of the perspectives of the 'peacekept', in this case **socially constructed combatant motivations**. As Chapter 2 demonstrated, former combatants' multifaceted motivations, strategies and tactics require further interrogation and proper understanding by peacebuilders, in order to effectively address them.
- (ii) A consideration of the evolving **historical, political, economic and social dynamics of regional conflict**, in line with **new regionalisms approaches**, which provide the context for unpacking combatant motivations and peacebuilding practice.
- (iii) A concern with the **everyday of peacebuilding**, focusing on the **practices of peacebuilders** along the peacebuilding spectrum, from headquarters to the field.

Of course, expanding the focus along the length and breadth of peace operations (that is to include the peacekept and the peacekeepers, as well as across the spectrum of peacebuilders) is rife with conceptual and methodological complexity. I have tried to manage this by introducing some delimitations. First is the choice to focus mainly on one group of the peace-kept, that is regional combatants, for reasons discussed in Chapter 2. Secondly, I focus one group of peacekeepers, albeit the largest one, the United Nations, although the discussion that follows will also consider its influence on sub-regional and national initiatives.

Two concepts highlighted above, **motivations** and **practices**, also require further elaboration. These are heavily informed by Alden et al.'s multi-layered framework of analysis for understanding and contextualising militias (2011: 20); Nilsson's analytical framework to address why some ex-combatants return to violence (2008: 12–17); and Autesserre's framework for investigating the everyday politics of international intervention and its impacts (2014: 24–35), in turn influenced by Adler and Pouliot (2011).

My understanding of combatant motivations begins with the premise that they are multifaceted and socially constructed by 'lucid, rational actors operating within the international system' (Alden et al. 2011: 28). As rationality is socially constructed, actors' interests and behaviour are subject to socializing norms and thus subject to change; thus 'it is important to conceptualize motivations along a continuum, and . . . emphasize . . . that motivations are not only fluid but also can evolve based on the contextual realities of a specific locale and period' (ibid.).

As such, I hypothesise that regional combatants 'employ a number of strategies to achieve their particularistic motivations . . . [including] manipulations of identity, and partnerships based on expediency and mutual economic benefit and that the strategies they employ depend on the target of persuasion (i.e. the government, international community, local population) and the characteristic or message they wish to convey through their strategies (e.g. to exert power, show resolve, foster trustworthiness)' (ibid.: 29–30). Further, '[m]ilitias apply a set of ideas, beliefs, values and narratives to improve their internal legitimacy and accountability' (ibid.: 32). Especially in a micro-regional context, they are likely to politicise identity-based cleavages variously to seek protection and support from local communities, and to create a social-psychological sense of unity both within the group and with other groups.

From the literature reviewed in this chapter, we may also hypothesise that peacebuilding practice is unable to accurately 'read' this social construction of combatant motivations. This is because peacebuilding practices are uncritical, technocratic, top-down, cookie-cutter approaches, often working within short timeframes, focused on results-based indicators (Benner et al. 2011). They also have

typically over-ambitious agendas that pay scant attention to local contexts, and largely ignore institutional gaps both among peacebuilders and within the host country (Alden et al. 2011). Such approaches do little to address the root causes and subsequent factors for conflict, and can themselves foster ex-combatant re-marginalisation and remobilisation (Nilsson 2008).

Here, the notion of ‘practice’ (Adler and Pouliot 2011: 7–8; also Autesserre 2014: 30–31) may be considered as (i) a performance, i.e. a ‘*process* of doing something’; (ii) patterned – regularised over time and space; (iii) ‘competent in a socially meaningful and recognizable way’ (‘groups of individuals tend to interpret its performance along similar standards’); (iv) resting on ‘background knowledge’; and (iv) weaving ‘together material and discursive worlds,’ representing preferences and policies using a variety of materials (Adler and Pouliot 2011: 7–8). This elaboration again highlights the importance of narratives, but also hints at how regularised practices are norm-forming to the extent of limiting critical self-reflection.

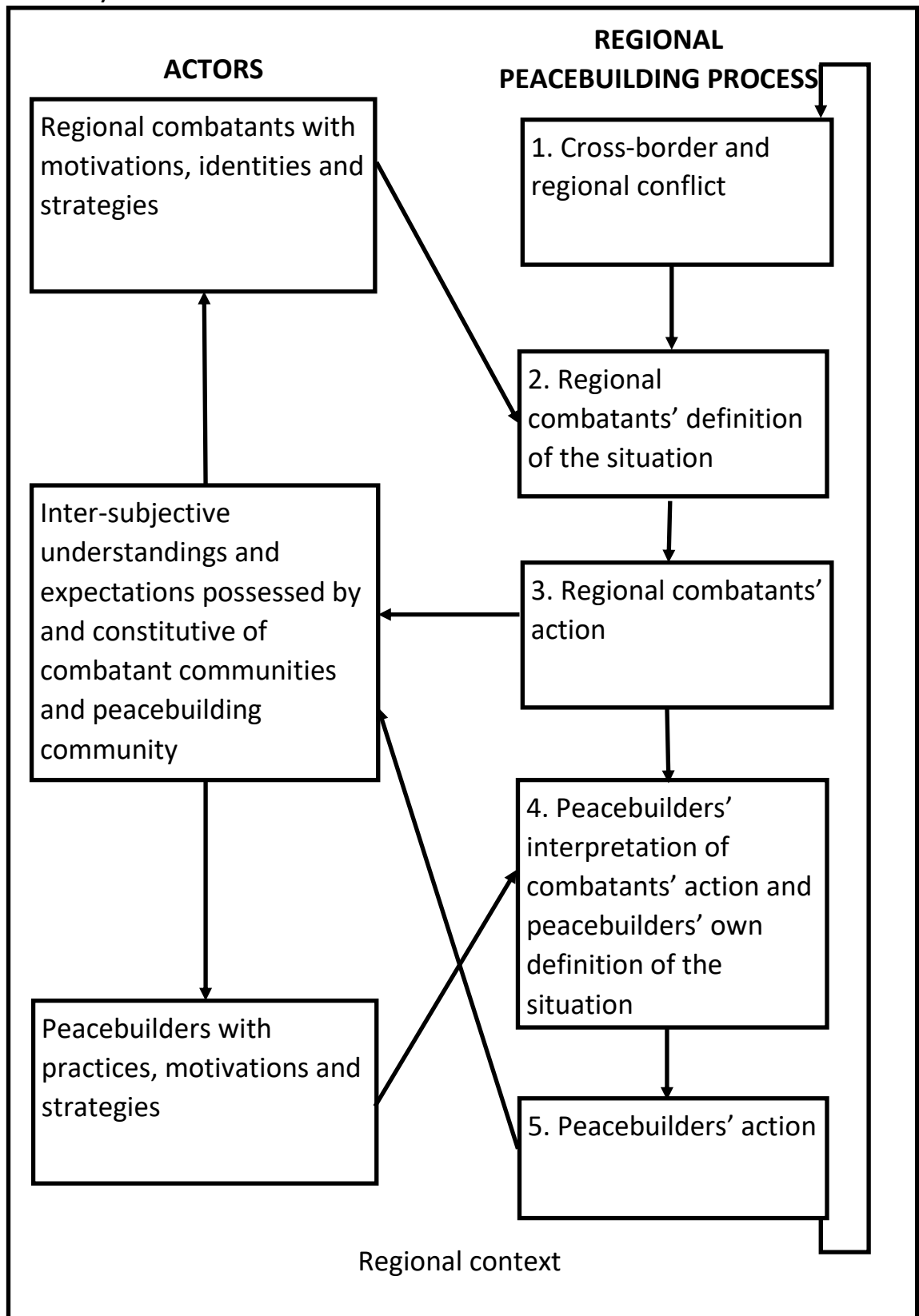
Further, this thesis is concerned with the **effectiveness** of peacebuilding practice. It borrows from definitions of organisational effectiveness, wherein definitions refer to the extent to which organisations are able to meet their stated objectives, and ‘the means through which they sustain themselves and attain their objectives, particularly those means that . . . come to assume the character of and function as organizational goals’ (Georgopoulos and Tannenbaum 1957: 535). These are discussed in Chapters 8 to 10 in relation to border stabilisation objectives. For the purposes of this study, effectiveness also refers to the extent to which peacebuilding practice is able to address regional combatants’ motivations, which is expanded on in Chapters 6 and 7.

Of importance also is the nexus of **inter-subjective understandings** that the motivations of the combatants bring to bear on the practices of the peacebuilders and vice versa, and the ways in which these are mediated by the regional dimension. By inter-subjective understandings, I mean that the identities and interests (or motivations) of regional ex-combatants and peacebuilders are endogenous to their interaction: the way they act towards one another is based on the meanings they ascribe to each other’s actions (Wendt 1992).

Further, an analysis of the regional dimension that is mediated by the new regionalisms approach elaborated on in Chapter 3 is critical in this context as it also highlights inter-subjective understandings, and the social construction of 'region'. Further, it demands an exploration of contemporary forms of transnational cooperation and cross-border flows through 'comparative, historical and multilevel perspectives (Schulz et al. 2001: 235), an approach that is particularly relevant to the subject.

The framework is shown pictorially in Figure 1 below, which is based on Wendt's 'Codetermination of institutions and process' model (Wendt 1992: 406). In this framework, however, we are concerned with agents – combatants and peacebuilders – as much as their institutions and as such in the model they have 'equal ontological status' (Wendt 1987: 339). In addition to enabling us to consider them as "'co-determined" or "mutually constituted"' (ibid.) it also takes cognisance of the fact that it is 'human action [that] instantiates, reproduces, and transforms . . . structures' (ibid: 345). It should be noted, and as will be apparent through the course of the discussion, that both sets of actors face constraints and opportunities, within a context of highly asymmetric power relations that operate at several levels both within and across their structures. This includes between the peacekept, including ex-combatants, and peacebuilders, as well as within peace operations themselves (for instance, between on-the-ground peacebuilders and headquarters).

Figure 1: A constructivist model of the regional peacebuilding process (based on Wendt 1992: 406)



It should be reiterated that this thesis sits within the field of constructivist International Relations – that is, the social construction of international politics and structures. What this means is helpfully summarised by Jackson and Sørensen as: (i) international relations consisting of thoughts and ideas rather than simply material conditions or forces; (ii) the core ideational elements upon which to focus are the inter-subjective beliefs (ideas, conceptions, assumptions, etc.) that are widely shared among people; (iii) shared beliefs that compose and express the interests and identities of people; and (iv) a focus on the ways in which those relations are formed and expressed (Jackson and Sørensen 2003: 254).

Accordingly, ‘the business of research [is] that of entering into the world of the people under study, scrutinizing their reasoning and language, exposing their assumptions and beliefs and showing how that conditions and shapes their behaviour’ (ibid.). In this context, and recalling the contribution of regional security complex theory in Chapter 3, conflict results from disagreement, dispute, misunderstanding or lack of communication between conscious agents, and a proper reading of the conflict requires inquiry into ‘the discourses at play’ (ibid.: 257).

Important also for this thesis is the relation of discourse to practice. As Foucault observes, discourses are ‘practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak . . . constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own invention’ (Foucault 1977: 49). Narratives, as a particular form of discourse, are also important. Narratives are ‘technologies of the self’ – cultural practices we use to express, explain and validate ourselves and our lives (ibid.). They are also socially constructed over time (Autesserre 2014). In other words, narratives ‘attempt to explain or normalize what has occurred; they lay out why things are the way they are or have become the way they are’ (Bamberg 2010: 6). This, however, means that these narratives are open to misinterpretation for, as Foucault observes, narratives are ‘fragments and it is up to you or me to see what we can make of them’ (Foucault 1980: 79). Thus, narratives around ‘ex-combatant’, ‘mercenary’, ‘DDR’, ‘peacekeeping’, and ‘peacebuilding’ should not be taken as given but rather as socially constructed over time, to explain, to normalise, justify or indeed vilify. Similarly, I subscribe to a constructivist understanding of power in this context to be both material and discursive.

Against this backdrop I conclude this chapter by revisiting my research sub-questions, with corresponding propositions, which informed the rest of the thesis:

Q1: What are regional combatants' motivations for moving to participate in neighbouring countries' conflicts?

Proposition 1: A range of inter-related motivations are responsible for combatants' participation in regional conflict, which are consolidated by particular narratives, strategies and tactics, and mediated by regional dynamics (Chapter 6 and 7).

Q2: To what extent do peace operations and on-the-ground peacebuilders take into consideration these motivations when developing peacebuilding and regional stabilization strategies? What limits them from effectively considering these motivations?

Proposition 2: Peacebuilders are constrained from adequately understanding regional combatant motivations as a result of adherence to dominant peacebuilding culture, prevailing discourses and ritualized practices, which limits effective engagement with combatant narratives and enables inefficient and ineffective modes of operation (Autesserre 2014: 5, 7) (Chapters 8 and 9).

Q3: To what extent have resulting strategies been effective in promoting regional peacebuilding?

Proposition 3: Peacebuilders are constrained from effectively responding to regional insecurity because of this adherence to culture, narratives and practices, and limited engagement with regional dynamics of conflict, with adverse implications for long-term regional peacebuilding (Chapters 9 and 10).

These questions and propositions guided my research design and data collection methods, as elaborated in the next chapter, and will be tackled as indicated above in empirical chapters 6 to 10.

5. Research design and methods

The preceding chapters have variously highlighted the importance for regional peacebuilding of understanding the motivations and perspectives of non-state actors, holistically considering the regional dimension, and taking into account the ‘everyday’ practice across the spectrum of peacebuilding actors, with the previous chapter elaborating on the framework to analyse these issues. Against this backdrop, Section 5.1 discusses my research design and elaborates on the research methodology – institutional ethnography and non-representative survey, respectively. Section 5.2 discusses the choice of study sites and my experience in the field. Section 5.3 considers my positionality, given my dual role as a researcher and a UN staff member throughout most of the fieldwork and writing-up phase, and elaborates on my efforts to address this potential ethical dilemma. Section 5.4 concludes the chapter with a summary of my analytical methods.

5.1. *Research methodology*

The main imperative driving my research design was the determination that I wanted to research agents at opposite ends of the peacebuilding spectrum – that is, regional ex-combatants and international (UN) peacebuilders – in a holistic manner. This is not least because, as Richards (2005a) argues, ‘[t]heories of “new wars” have stripped violent conflict of its social content’ (2005a: 17). He further admonishes that ‘only by stepping up close will the complex intertwining of multiple motivations become tractable to analysis’ (ibid.: 11). Therefore, a large part of my study was about ‘stepping up close’ – not just to the perpetrators of conflict but also to those whose job it is to try and end conflict. Of importance also was the idea that ‘the political world, including international relations, is created and constituted entirely by people. Nothing social exists outside of that human activity or independent of it’ (Jackson and Sørensen 2003: 258).

These considerations greatly informed my choice of methods, but I should also note that the course of my fieldwork itself greatly informed the eventual research methods applied. I commenced my fieldwork with a preliminary visit to Liberia from May to June 2010, but the bulk of my fieldwork took place over three months from February

to April 2012, and two further years from August 2012 to July 2014, followed by some residual activities from August 2014 to February 2015 and again from July 2015 to September 2016. For most of the period from August 2012, I was also working for the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). Originally my appointment was only meant to provide me with a means of income while ‘in the field’, but it resulted in a substantive deviation from my initial research plan, especially given that it enabled me to undertake an in-depth study of regional peacebuilding approaches *in situ*.

My original research plan, presented and submitted for ethical approval in late 2010 following the preliminary visit, envisioned that my study would have both qualitative and quantitative elements, aimed primarily at uncovering regional ex-combatants’ movement and settlement motivations. The quantitative element was to include a structured questionnaire to build up a profile of ex-combatants, the characteristics of their community of origin and armed groups, and their post-conflict reintegration and settlement choices. The qualitative element was to uncover perceptions of DDR and reasons for settling in particular communities. I then planned to discuss the implications of these findings on regional peacebuilding.

After my first visit to Liberia in 2012, two things became very clear: (1) I lacked and was unlikely to raise the necessary funds for a large-scale study on regional ex-combatants, and (2) whereas previous such studies had had a ready sampling pool and strategies based on DDR lists, the group I was interested in was essentially a hidden population, rendering random sampling procedures null and void. Even the strategy I had thought to use – respondent-driven sampling – upon closer scrutiny proved untenable, and would in no way have returned a sample that I could have defended as ‘representative’. Also, when I conceived of the research, I had thought that I was dealing with a population that was at least bounded by the end of conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire in 2002, 2003 and 2007, respectively. This proved not to be the case, however, when electoral violence erupted in Côte d’Ivoire following presidential elections in October–November 2010. An estimated 4,500 Liberians participated militarily (Group of Experts on Côte d’Ivoire 2011b), and some 225,000 Ivoirian refugees fled to Liberia and settled in host communities and refugee camps along the Ivoirian–Liberian border, among them an unknown number of (former)

Ivoirian and Liberian militias. The willing participation of such a large number of Liberian ex-combatants in the conflict made me realise that my research project remained extremely relevant, and that it would be necessary to capture not only the motivations of those individuals who participated but also to strive to understand how regional participation in domestic conflict was taking place under the watchful eye of not one but two UN peacekeeping missions in both Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire (as well as a significant UN successor presence in Sierra Leone), especially following comprehensive DDR programmes, at least in Sierra Leone and Liberia, and given the apparent wealth of experience of international peace operations in the sub-region. This included sub-regional organisations such as ECOWAS and MRU, which, as noted in Chapter 3, had instituted a range of strategies and frameworks to address insecurity and build peace in the sub-region following the conflicts in the 1990s and early 2000s. As such, it became clear that 'my' ex-combatants would need to share centre stage with the peacebuilders charged with securing a lasting peace in the sub-region (but who, at least to some extent, were failing to do so). It also brought to the fore the concerns of the new regionalisms approach, as borders, especially between Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, became a transnational or micro-regional locus of insecurity, and essentially a case study for how to not to do regional peacebuilding.

I therefore decided on a two-track approach. The first involved an element of my original research – an effort to assemble the range of perspectives of regional ex-combatants regarding their motivations for fighting, their experience of DDR, their motivations for moving to fight, and their current prospects, extending my focus to recently remobilised Liberian fighters from the 2010–2011 electoral crisis. Concurrently, I decided to analyse UN and regional peacebuilding efforts, seeking to identify whether the two perspectives could meet in the middle, or indeed what prevented them from doing so.

To this end, while it threw up all sorts of ethical dilemmas, I was extremely fortunate to secure a position with UNMIL, fortuitously working on vulnerable youth (ex-combatants by another name in common Liberian parlance) as well as cross-border stabilisation. While most constructivists (or the anthropologists among them in any case!) would advocate an ethnographical approach for understanding ex-combatant

motivations, given my positionality, I decided to apply this approach instead to my study of peacebuilders. At the same time, even though I did not want to apply a quantitative survey instrument, I decided to apply a systematic approach to the study of ex-combatants, which took the form of in-depth interviews. My research methodologies thus evolved into a combination of 'institutional ethnography' to study peacebuilding institutions, and a 'non-representative survey' to study ex-combatants.

5.1.1. Institutional ethnography

Institutional ethnography (IE) was originally developed by Dorothy E. Smith as a methodological realisation of a Marxist feminist sociology project (Smith 2002). According to DeVault, '[i]nstitutional ethnographies are built from the examination of work processes and study of how they are coordinated . . . Work activities are taken as the fundamental grounding of social life, and an institutional ethnography generally takes some particular experience (and associated work processes) as a point of entry' (DeVault 2006: 294).

IE permits an examination into how people are drawn into a common set of organisational processes (Gubrium and Holstein 2001). It seeks to explore how people's lives are socially controlled, and how individuals are bound to institutional activity without their knowledge. As with other types of ethnography, IE is an investigation of social organisation concerned with and situated in ordinary daily activity and a method by which to explore the social relations¹³ that structure everyday life.

IE is generally concerned with the extra-local and trans-local influences on people's social activities within institutions, which are thought to be increasingly replacing social organisation with 'technologies of social control' (DeVault 2006: 6). DeVault (2006) describes these technologies as discursive by nature, and Smith refers to them as 'exogenous systems of rationally designed textually-mediated forms of organisation' (Smith 2002: 39). Indeed, text plays a critical role, and as such it is 'a method of inquiry that problematizes social relations at the local site of lived experience and examines

¹³ The term 'social relations' is taken in its Marxist sense to mean connections made between people through activity, rather than relationships.

how textual sequences coordinate consciousness and ruling relations' (Walby 2007: 1008).

This extra-local discourse acts as a mutual point of reference in the local context, even as the authors of external discourse/text transcend the local historical context (Luken and Vaughan 2014). At local levels people use this external discourse to coordinate and rationalise their activity and enter into local discourse with others who do the same. Thus, the uniqueness of individual experiences and perspectives appear to be overridden by these forms of social organisation (institutions) that generalise and objectify through discourse (reading, talking or acting), initiated by the standardised and replicable form of extra-local text. The aim is to unravel the interconnectedness of activities in different sites, as well as to learn about the individual's location in the relations of ruling or to learn what the individual does with texts (Walby 2007).

For the purpose of this thesis, and the fieldwork undertaken, it should also be recalled that IE involves sampling institutional processes (in this case regional peacebuilding processes) and social relations, rather than a population (Smith 2002: 26). As Smith explains: 'institutional ethnographers are not using people's experiences as a basis for making statements about them, about the population of individuals, or about events or states of affairs described from the point of view of individuals' (Smith 2005: 125). Smith's contribution has been 'to discover how ideas, legitimated through coordinated discourses, organize knowledge and action' (Smith and Turner 2014: 261) in everyday life. But she also recognises that people's lived experiences are organized by processes that 'extend outside the scope of the everyday world and are not discoverable within it' (Smith 1987: 178).

This is particularly pertinent for this thesis, which explores how extra-local UN policy (largely embodied in texts, as is common with most large bureaucracies) and the resulting practice (as defined in the previous chapter) mediate social relations with regard to regional peacebuilding vis-à-vis their day-to-day interpretation, adaptation or indeed abandonment on the ground, and how this interacts with the narratives and discourses of target beneficiaries, in this case ex-combatants. Thus, I seek to understand how peacebuilders' daily practice is shaped by (and indeed shapes) extra-local discourses derived from official texts.

In my methodology, I used the range of institutional ethnography tools, primarily textual analysis, but also interviews and participant-observation to analyse and illustrate how people's lived experiences are organised by, and in turn shape to the extent possible, processes beyond their everyday. For the textual analysis, I limited myself to publicly available documents for the most part. Apart from ethical concerns (see below), I was interested in dominant narratives and discourses, and documents in the public domain are indicative of the collective acceptance of a prevailing narrative related to an official approach or strategy. These documents include Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and documents concerning peace operations, reports of the UN Secretary-General, UN Headquarters' assessment reports, and Panels of Experts reports, among others.

As may be expected, participant-observation also featured heavily in my research. This included participation in internal and cross-UN mission policymaking and cooperation on cross-border stabilisation; involvement in developing and implementing sub-regional cross-border security strategies; and countless meetings with regional peacebuilding institutions, including Liberian Government ministries and agencies, MRU, ECOWAS, international and national NGOs, and specialised agencies of the UN, among others. The research also drew directly and indirectly on statements and observations made in public gatherings by government officials, employees of non-governmental organisations, academics and other stakeholders involved in regional peacebuilding practice throughout the conduct of this study. I further conducted formal, semi-formal and informal interviews, and held innumerable conversations with representatives of these institutions. Table A2.1 in Annex 2 provides a summary of formal and semi-formal interviews conducted.

5.1.2. Studying ex-combatant narratives: a non-representative survey method

As noted in Chapter 2, research on the motivations of combatants in both Sierra Leone and Liberia has benefited from a variety of methodological approaches. This includes ethnographic studies in the vein of Utas (2003), large-scale surveys, including, notably, Humphrey and Weinstein's (2004) random sampling strategy with Sierra Leonean ex-combatants, and the respondent-driven sampling method employed by Bøås and Hatløy (2008) in Monrovia. Several anthropological studies have also considered

motivations in the two countries in tandem (Hoffman 2011a; Richards 2005; Ferme and Hoffman 2004). These varied approaches have yielded a rich body of data, demonstrating the relevance of different approaches in studying this complex subject.

While an ethnographic approach to studying regional combatants inherently appealed to me, I realised that this would likely only allow me to follow one group/cohort, whereas I was interested in a cross-section of ex-combatants – Sierra Leoneans, Liberians, Ivoirians; urban and rural residents; ‘first generation’ movers and more recent participants in cross-border conflict; and so on. The survey method would have been perhaps more appropriate but I did not have hypotheses to try and ‘prove’ but rather guiding propositions. Furthermore, as mentioned above, I did not have any reasonable expectation of estimating my sampling frame given the fluid nature of the population I was dealing with. This latter point speaks to a wider limitation of the survey method in this type of study, as firstly, sampling and data collection relies on within-borders population frames, and secondly, standard statistical analyses may not be able to adequately capture important motivations to do with the social connections that occur in fluid border areas.

I thus chose a hybrid approach – using a survey-instrument style questionnaire (which would enable me to situate my ‘data’ within actual large-scale surveys) but administering it in an in-depth interview format, to enable me to get the information, especially in relation to narrative analysis, required for the type of analysis I was after (see Annex 3 for the questionnaire, information sheet and consent form). Notwithstanding, I understood my work would have several limitations – including that I would not be able to draw generalisable conclusions. I was reasonably confident, however, that I might be able to compile enough data to interrogate the proposition of myriad motivations, and the narratives developed to support them.

As I was concerned with narratives, I viewed my interviewees’ responses as performative acts; thus I was as concerned with what *they* wanted to emphasise, as with what I wanted to ‘objectively’ know, which allowed me not to get too hung up about whether I was getting the ‘right’ information or the ‘truth’ but rather accounted for these by building in cross-checks for certain questions (for instance asking the same question in different ways).

In terms of actual methodology, in-depth interviews were conducted with 53 ex-combatants, although for most of the analysis data from 50 interviews – 25 in Monrovia and 25 in Grand Gedeh County – were used for consistency. I also undertook six formal focus group discussions (FGDs): one exclusively with ex-combatants in Monrovia; two with a mixed group of ex-combatants and community youth, also in Monrovia; two with mixed group of former combatants and refugees/former refugees, just outside Monrovia (Sierra Leoneans) and in Grand Gedeh (Liberians/Ivoirians); and one with ex-combatants and miners in a mining community in Gbarpolu, bordering Sierra Leone. In a nod to the ethnographic approach, I further engaged in extensive participant-observation and informal group discussions with ex-combatants and mixed groups similar to those with whom I conducted FGDs. Taking advantage of work trips I was also able to engage extensively with refugees residing in various communities in Nimba County (November 2012), in PTP Camp in Grand Gedeh (April 2013) and in Little Wlebo Camp in Maryland County (November 2013 and February 2016) (See Table A2.2 in Annex 2 for a summary of combatant-related interviews and FGDs). While I engaged some female ex-combatants, none that I came across had been active in cross-border conflict so females are unfortunately not represented in my sample. I did, however, have informal conversations with pro-Gbagbo female refugees in camps and host communities in Grand Gedeh and Maryland counties, as well as with Sierra Leonean females accompanying ex-combatants, who had opted for community resettlement in Liberia. These conversations helped me to gain a gendered perspective on the regional dimensions of conflict, but not enough to substantially inform my analysis and subsequent discussion.

5.1.3. A note on focus group discussions

FGDs are considered to sit somewhere in between participant observation and individual interviews. In keeping with Morgan (1997), I did not draw a distinction between formal group interviews and more informal group gatherings and instead used a range of settings based on what seemed most appropriate in a given setting. For instance, in March 2012, I engaged in focus group discussion with a small group of ex-combatant and community youth near ELWA junction in Monrovia. This was quite impromptu, took the form of an informal discussion in a drinking circle on an

outcropping near the beach, and consisted of me throwing in questions from time to time but it mostly consisted of a free-flowing discussion about a range of topics. In contrast, on 21 April 2013, I held a highly structured focus group discussion with regional ex-combatant and non-combatant youth at West Point. The setting was at a Youth Intellectual Forum, and I was asked to propose the issue for discussion ('Conflict and regional security in post-conflict West Africa'), which was publicised in advance. On the day itself, a moderator introduced me and the topic, admonished participants to speak openly and freely, and then handed me the floor.

As different as these, and my other focus group settings were, they each yielded a wealth of information that not only greatly informed my analysis but also emphasised the social construction of motivations and inter-subjective understandings of regional peace and security. This is because with FGDs group interaction is an explicit part of the method (Berg 2008), with the group dynamic and interactive nature resulting in a synergy that places greater emphasis on participants' viewpoints. As such, not only does it 'reflect collective notions shared and negotiated by the group' (ibid: 178) but an FGD may also emphasise those narratives that collectively carry more weight, and 'the comparisons that participants make among each others' experiences and opinions are a valuable source of insights into complex behaviours and motivations' (Morgan 1997: 15). The FGDs also emphasised the performative nature of narratives, buoyed as participants' orations were by the presence of an audience. Further, in purely practical terms the FGDs also allowed me to 'observe a large amount of interaction on a topic in a limited period of time' (ibid: 8).

This is not to say conducting FGDs is problem-free. Some of the disadvantages, however, such as the limited number of questions posed, particular personalities dominating the discussion, or insufficient observational data (Berg 2008) was eased by the triangulation of data obtained with the non-structured interviews and participant observation. Indeed, the fact that I conducted individual interviews with focus group participants, often shortly after group discussions, meant I could tease out incomplete information and hear from the quieter participants.

5.2. Study sites

As mentioned above, certain developments during the lifetime of my fieldwork led to some adjustments, both in terms my approach and of my planned research sites. In terms of the institutional ethnography, which included investigation of regional and international institutions, most of the primary fieldwork was done in situ, i.e. in Monrovia, but work on these areas also took me to Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire and Freetown, Sierra Leone, as well as to various border regions. I additionally took advantage of a stint at the UN Secretariat in New York to observe first-hand 'how things work' at UN Headquarters, as well as to interview staff who had been or still were involved in backstopping DDR, peace operations and political affairs in the sub-region.

With regard to ex-combatants, my research sites were more varied. In addition to Monrovia, where the majority of ex-combatants, whether national or regional, had indicated a preference for resettlement during Liberia's DDR programme, initial fieldwork in 2010 and early 2012 had focused on gold mining camps, rubber plantations and refugee resettlement camps along the border with Sierra Leone, where key informants had reliably informed me that many Sierra Leonean ex-combatants still remained, as at the time I was still mostly interested in identifying and interviewing Sierra Leonean ex-combatants still residing in Liberia.

From 2010–2011, however, Côte d'Ivoire experienced large scale post-electoral crisis. I recognised that my study would be enhanced by the opportunity to capture the perspective of 'active' ex-combatants. Therefore, during my 2012–2014 period, in addition to fieldwork in two deprived (slum) areas of Monrovia, I also concentrated research efforts on border towns, refugee settlements and gold mining communities in Nimba, Maryland and Grand Gedeh Counties, which border Côte d'Ivoire, the latter with support from a research assistant (see Figure 2 below for locations, and the Table A2.3 in Annex 2 for a summary of key participant observation opportunities in these and other areas.

Figure 2: Map of Liberia with study sites



Adapted by Aaron Jell from www.nationsonline.org/maps/liberia-political-map.jpg

I should also note that I had originally envisioned undertaking research in Sierra Leone, potentially on returned Sierra Leonean ex-combatants. As the research evolved, however, it became clear that Liberia remained the locus for ex-combatant activity, within which various types of regional ex-combatants coalesced, including Sierra Leoneans who had fought in Liberia (and Côte d'Ivoire), and Liberians who had fought in Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire. In the course of my research I also came across other types of ex-combatants who were not the focus of my study but whose experience nonetheless informed the study, including Liberian ex-combatants who had not fought

in any other country, and Ivoirian ex-militias¹⁴ who were laying low in Liberian refugee camps and settlement communities.

Throughout my research, and in keeping with the new regionalisms approach elaborated in Chapter 3, it became clear that Liberia's border regions were highly subject to particular discourses and narratives, which fed into the ways in which ex-combatants both perceived themselves and were perceived, and resulted in very specific intervention strategies by national, regional and international peacebuilders, which meant that notions of 'border' came to feature much more strongly in my research than originally anticipated.

5.3. *Ethical considerations and positionality*

*[Don't] you see her hair? Don't worry, she's our sister.*¹⁵

I found that the foremost factor that granted me access to and 'kudos' among ex-combatants and other 'vulnerable youth' was my choice of hairstyle – the dreadlocks I had started to grow in 2009. When I had announced my intention to begin 'growing dreads' to my parents a few years earlier, my father opined that only crazy people and drug addicts wore dreads, and my mother simply begged, 'please don't.' For conservative Sierra Leoneans it was the ultimate posture of rebellion and, while in more liberal Liberia I observed with surprise quite a few women sporting the hairstyle in 2006, in both countries it remained somewhat risqué, associated with a spirit of rebellion, individualism and, fortuitously, the style of choice among the 'cooler' ex-combatants, laden as it was with the connotations of the iconic Bob Marley. Sitting in 'cane juice' (local Liberian brew) drinking circles, 'attaya' tea shops and gold mining camps, I was frequently greeted with 'one love', 'my African sister', and a fist pump.

¹⁴ While I have used this term as loosely interchangeable with combatant, here I use the term 'militia' deliberately to separate these from groups of former fighters who (on the whole) would have been recognised as ex-combatants and would have had the chance to go through a DDR process as part of a peace agreement. Conversely, the mostly pro-Gbagbo Ivoirian militias for the most part were not considered eligible for the Ivoirian DDR programme, which was ongoing during most of my research, as not belonging to recognised fighting factions, which was another source of tension.

¹⁵ A common refrain among ex-combatants, referencing my dreadlocks as an indicator of my solidarity with them, in reaction to whether they could trust my presence in their space.

When joints were about to be lit, or little packets of some illicit drug or the other were being (not too surreptitiously) bought and sold, someone would invariably look enquiringly in my direction, before someone else would respond with something along the lines of the quote above.

My ability to interact with these groups was further enhanced by the fact that I was from the sub-region, although somewhat removed: with Liberians, I was simply from a sister country, where they knew that we speak the 'English from England' (as opposed to the American-influenced English of Liberia), and that we shared the experience of being 'youth'¹⁶ from desperately poor countries devastated by conflict. I spoke to, and interviewed Sierra Leoneans in Krio, the *lingua franca*, who were quite excited that their 'sister' had come looking for them and that they weren't forgotten in Liberia. My grandmother was half Liberian, with most of her family remaining there most of their lives, so by extension I also had the benefit of being Liberian as well as Sierra Leonean, something it turned out I had in common with a good number of my respondents, as shown in the next Chapter. Also by serendipity, my key informant/research assistant in Montserrado County was a half Liberian, half Sierra Leonean ex-combatant, who spoke fluent Krio. Quite apart from the fact that this meant he had extensive contacts with the Sierra Leonean ex-combatant community, once he realised that, despite seeming appearance to the contrary, I was 'actually' Sierra Leonean and spoke Krio he warmed to me considerably and went out of his way to help. An aspiring student himself, he was also keen to see my research progress, and even took it upon himself to undertake a situation analysis of ex-combatants in Liberia for me. Similarly, my research assistant in Grand Gedeh, a Liberian, had spent time as a refugee in Côte d'Ivoire, at one time returning to Liberia to try and become a child combatant before being chased down by his mother and returned to Côte d'Ivoire. (Incidentally, both cited avenging atrocities against family members as their reason for wanting to fight.)

This apparent acceptance notwithstanding, my access to these circles was at all times mediated by these and similar gatekeepers. I found that when I tried to track people down directly, they would agree to meet and then adamantly deny that they had been

¹⁶ In West Africa a youth is largely considered as anyone between the ages of 15 and 35.

combatants, even if others had reliably confirmed that they were. It appeared that I was never considered quite trustworthy enough to divulge information to, even in informal circles, so I quite quickly realised it made more sense to formalise my interactions, which provided them with a measure of control over the situation, especially as this invariably included a 'sitting fee' of US\$5, negotiated in advance with the gatekeeper. More formalised settings also meant that I could obtain informed consent from all the people with whom in-depth interviews were conducted, including to record (some) interviews. The ethics of 'paying for information' was ameliorated, as far as I was concerned, by the desperate situation many of my interviewees found themselves in; I felt it was the least I could do in return for them taking the time and effort to talk to me, and we framed it as providing for 'scratch cards' (mobile phone top-ups), which they could use to help me identify others to interview (during FGDs I also provided refreshments to the extent that this was possible).

During the period I was working for UNMIL, I did not go out of my way to hide this fact, so although I was always explicit that my engagement with interviewees was only in relation to my academic research, invariably, however, I found that respondents were always keen to get a message across to UNMIL about the many shortcomings of reintegration programmes and the dire situation of youth. In any case this was useful for my work at UNMIL, because these were also issues I was consumed with professionally.

Ethical considerations were arguably more problematic in terms of my institutional research. In order to keep myself accountable, I have made a point not to use any data that I could not have reasonably obtained from public records, unless I explicitly requested permission from the author(s), it was provided to me in direct relation to my PhD research, or it was non-confidential material that I had produced myself. Needless to say, however, my analysis is also informed by the countless meetings I participated in, confidential documents that I both read and produced on the topic, and informal conversations about the regional combatant 'problem', which I cannot divorce myself from. In order to ensure accountability, I informed supervisors, co-workers and other colleagues about the nature of my PhD and its relation to my day-to-day work and reminded them at regular intervals that this was a part of my reason

for being in Liberia and that the day-to-day working of the UN formed a component of my study. Anybody I interviewed in relation was also explicitly informed of my study.

My positionality in relation to my colleagues at UNMIL and to the institution itself also merits some consideration. In reading both Autesserre's books referenced above, in which she takes to task the construction of knowledge among peacebuilders, as well as their problematic practices, habits and narratives, I felt that I did not recognise myself in her characterisation of the inhabitants of *Peaceland*. Instead, I imagined myself more closely aligned to those exceptional individuals who, she noted, had taken the time and effort to understand the context in which they were working, and engage more meaningfully with the peacekept. After all, at the beginning of my fieldwork I had lived with Liberian hosts who were relatives or friends of family friends, and introduced to more of the same. Other Liberians I came to know, and socialise with, through my fieldwork and then at work, like my combatant communities had cross-border ties, including with Sierra Leone, so we had that in common, while others hailed from the same County in Liberia or ethnic group as my grandmother's family. Yet other Liberians, who I met through church and other social institutions were Americo-Liberians, again some with extensive ties with my Creole (Krio) community in Sierra Leone, so there was an instant familiarity, and more than once I was stopped in the street by someone enquiring whether I was so-and-so's daughter from the Americo-Liberian/Congo community, so I suppose I also had that 'look' about me.

All of this had me smugly dismissing Autesserre's assertions about interveners' everyday, which 'created and maintained firm boundaries between them and their local counterparts'; 'their perception of themselves as markedly different from host populations'; and their 'valuing external expertise over local knowledge' (Autesserre 2014: 12-13), as not applying to me, with the additional benefit of doing my PhD undoubtedly rendering me more self-aware and reflective than most. But this was juxtaposed with frequent assertions by Liberian and other African colleagues that other, invariably 'Western' colleagues especially 'liked me' and gave me opportunities because 'I understood their language', and knew how to write like 'they' wanted. They largely ascribed this to my growing up in the West (which was not true but my accent seemingly proved what I denied), or at least from the insider knowledge I had gained

from working and living abroad for a significant period. While I largely dismissed the former observations, I could not discount the latter, nor the fact that I seemed able to move (relatively) easily between the worlds of the ‘interveners’, ‘insider interveners’ and the ‘peacekept’, and that this ‘in’ with interveners, including at senior levels, enabled me to make insights and arrive at conclusions central to this thesis from a highly privileged position. I did challenge my ‘insider’ perspective constantly, however, to the extent that I was quite worried about some of my conclusions, particularly in chapters 8 and 9. Nonetheless, while they left me wondering nervously about whether I would be hired again within the UN, they also enabled me to confidently conclude that I had not sacrificed academic rigour at the altar of my rarefied UN perspective!

Notwithstanding, given the inherent ethical and positionality dilemmas with both the ex-combatant and institutional aspects of my research, I was ever conscious of the need to be reflexive about my engagement, especially considering that in no way could I have been perceived as ‘neutral’ in either setting, given that in my work I was constantly called upon to inform decisions about the very things I was studying. To keep myself accountable, I maintained an audio diary, where I tried to think through my concerns and how best to address them. As mentioned above, I also largely limited myself to publicly accessible documents, and regularly informed and reminded supervisors and other colleagues of my research.

5.4. *Relating methodology and data collection to analysis*

The empirical chapters that follow are largely guided by discourse analysis, I make use of the three main modes of discourse analysis, namely the negotiation of discourses in social relationships/interactions; the production of identities and subjectivities through discourses; and the production of power/knowledge, ideologies, and control through discourses (Clarke 2005: 183). Clarke characterises discourses as ‘relentlessly social phenomena,’ and as language that both reflects and shapes social order as well as individuals’ interaction with society (Clarke 2005: 147–8, citing Jaworski and Coupland 1999: 3).

In keeping with my constructivist framework, I am concerned with discourse both as the construction of meanings, and as bodies of knowledge ‘constituting sets of

practices [and] distinctive disciplinary formations through which power/knowledge operates' (Clarke 2005: 6). Further, in keeping with my multi-layered framework, I agree with Clarke's observation that

Because we and the people and things we choose to study are all routinely both producing and awash in seas of discourses, analyzing only individual and collective human actors no longer suffices for many qualitative projects. Increasingly, historical, visual, narrative, and other discourse materials and nonhuman material cultural objects of all kinds must be included as elements of our research and subjected to analysis because they are increasingly understood/interpreted as both constitutive of and consequential for the phenomena we study. (Clarke 2005: 145)

In relation to the discourse analysis itself, I incorporated both narrative and textual analysis. The combatant motivation chapters draw largely on a narrative analysis approach, which relates to the collection and analysis of qualitative information in order to understand the narratives people – in this case ex-combatants – use to create meaning in their lives and experiences. I thus endeavoured to 'see the world' through the eyes of combatants (Riley and Hawe 2005: 1), while being aware of the performative nature of their narration, mediated by their perception of me, both as a researcher and a UN staff member. My concern was with aggregating data from ex-combatant interviews and categorising their accounts into motivations, strategies and identities, aided by a detailed interview questionnaire and reinforced by focus group discussions both with ex-combatants and with relevant communities (refugee/ex-refugee), including in mixed settings. The latter, together with an extensive review of relevant documentation, provided some triangulation of data. The focus group and informal discussions were particularly important for reinforcing the motivations articulated by ex-combatant interviewees, but also taking them beyond individual perspectives and anchoring them within border societies. As noted above, in these contexts, the co-constructed and performed nature of accounts became even more apparent, the latter being greatly aided by my analysis of audio recordings of interviews and (the formal) discussions. These are elaborated on in Chapters 6 and 7. While I had initially planned to use NVivo to analyse the transcripts of the interviews and discussions, I found that I was already coding as I listened to and transcribed my recordings, with the added value of being able to think through the inflections and performative nature of the discussions, so I ended up coding manually.

In Chapters 8 to 10 I analyse the extent to which peacebuilders were seeing/able to see the world through the eyes of combatants, and the extent to which the narratives of regional ex-combatants were able to 'speak' to the practice of peacebuilders. In this, I largely relied on textual analysis as discussed in Sub-section 5.1.1 above, and considered especially the ways in which largely extra-local text, as discussed in Chapter 8, engages with and is translated by on-the-ground peacebuilders (Chapters 9 and 10). These empirical chapters now follow.

6. Regional combatants in West Africa: motivations and machinations

Chapter 6 presents the empirical data from my research with ex-combatants, situating the findings within the rich body of work on combatant motivations in the Mano River sub-region, discussed in Chapter 2. Building on emerging themes, it delves into the question of combatant motivations for *moving* to fight, aiming to address sub-question 1: *What are regional combatants' motivations for moving to participate in neighbouring countries' conflicts?*

Section 6.1 presents a brief profile of the ex-combatants I interviewed. This is not to imply that I infer any representativeness from my sample, but more to demonstrate my effort to ensure that I would be able to capture variations in experiences and motivations. Section 6.2 focuses on regional combatants' motivations for moving to fight within the sub-region, and contrasts these with their initial motivations. In keeping with the conceptual framework introduced in Chapter 4, Section 6.3 considers the social construction of combatant motivation narratives, and indeed the evolution from a combatant to a regional (ex-)combatant, arguing that the lack of awareness of which, as subsequent chapters show, have placed limitations on responding peacebuilding practice, which do not engage sufficiently with this social 'constructedness'. Section 6.4 concludes.

6.1. Ex-combatant profiles

For the purposes of this thesis, as elaborated in Chapter 5, the bulk of analysis in this chapter is based on data from interviews with 50 ex-combatants, 25 in Monrovia and 25 in Grand Gedeh, undertaken between April 2013 and March 2014. Each of these had fought in at least two of the four countries in the sub-region (i.e. Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea); quite a few had fought in three and at least one had fought in all four. I additionally use data from six focus group discussions I conducted with ex-combatants, community members, refugees, former refugees and miners, between April 2010 and November 2013, as elaborated in the previous chapter and in Annex 2.

While a relatively small sample, the analysis is informed by numerous informal interviews, conversations and group discussions with former combatants (both regional and country-bound), and other groups over several years. Further, each of my key informants in Monrovia and Grand Gedeh (one who was a former combatant, and one who had a near miss with the experience) richly informed my research, as individuals who had interacted with countless regional fighters, and the discussion below is greatly enhanced by their perspectives. These sources were further supplemented by UN Panel of Experts reports; UNMIL reports; interviews and informal conversations with UNMIL staff between 2010 and 2013; and transcripts from witness testimonies during the trial of Liberia's former President Charles Taylor in The Hague (under the jurisdiction of the Special Court for Sierra Leone) for war crimes over his role in Sierra Leone's conflict.

All of the 25 combatants interviewed in Grand Gedeh were Liberians. Of those in Monrovia, 12 were Liberian, nine were Sierra Leonean and four self-identified as both. While limited and non-representative, my sample demonstrates similar characteristics to those from large-scale representative studies undertaken, including one in Sierra Leone in 2003 (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004), and one in Liberia in 2006 (Pugel 2007). For instance, during his Liberia survey undertaken in 2006, Pugel (2007) found that the average (mean) age of respondents was 26.6, which would be the equivalent of 33.6 at the time I undertook my research in 2013 (born around 1980). Correspondingly, the (modal) average birth date among my respondents was the early 1980s, with their dates of birth ranging from 1963 to 1990 (see Table A4.1 in Annex 4).

Similarly, I captured a spread of ethnicities. As elaborated in Table A4.2 in Annex 4, 11 of Liberia's 15 ethnic groups were represented in my sample (Pugel's study captured 10 groups). Members of the Krahn ethnic group were over-represented, but this was to be expected as Grand Gedeh is a Krahn-dominated County, and I purposely prioritised researching in Grand Gedeh to interrogate the kinship narrative with Côte d'Ivoire. At the same time, however, it should be noted that only four respondents reported as being exclusively Krahn, with the others also indicating one or two other ethnic affiliations. The 13 Sierra Leoneans (including those who were half Liberian)

reported six ethnic groups between them (Table A4.3 in Annex 4). Humphreys and Weinstein (2004) captured 10 ethnicities, noting that there were no appreciable differences in the demographic makeup between Civilian Defence Forces (CDF) and Revolutionary United Front (RUF) respondents, including ethnicity. My sample was too small to make any similar conclusion but it may be worthwhile to note that the six RUF respondents reported four ethnic groups among them (Kissi, Mende, Limba and Temne).

There are some obvious and expected differences, however. For instance, comparing the original fighting factions of my respondents that started fighting in Liberia, relative to those captured in a random sample survey of ex-combatants by Pugel (2007), former AFL and ULIMO-J respondents were over-represented (Table A4.4, Annex 4). This was to be expected, given that half of my interviews were undertaken in Grand Gedeh County where former President Doe originated from, and both these groups were pro-Doe (or at least anti-Taylor). Most of these went on to fight for MODEL, which was considered a reincarnation of ULIMO-J, and supported by Gbagbo against Taylor, and unsurprisingly also fought for pro-Gbagbo forces in Côte d'Ivoire. Similarly, with my Sierra Leonean sample, RUF was over-represented (Table A4.5, Annex 4), which could be expected because, as noted above, it was mostly RUF combatants who fled to Liberia following the end of Sierra Leone's civil war. Nonetheless, although LURD was not the first fighting faction for most of my respondents, it should be noted that at least six of them, both Sierra Leoneans and Liberians, went on to fight for LURD.

As noted in Chapter 1, an additional (deliberate) feature of this sample was an effort to encompass four distinct timeframes of cross-border conflict. The first reflected movements between Sierra Leoneans and Liberians at the start of each conflict, for instance a Sierra Leonean who had started with NPFL in 1989 and then joined RUF in its invasion in 1991, or a Liberian AFL soldier who took refuge in Sierra Leone and while there joined the Liberians United for Defence Force (LUDF), which became United Liberation Defence Movement for Liberia (ULIMO) and fought against RUF and NPFL, both in Sierra Leone and Liberia in the early 1990s. The second period is during the denouement of the conflict in Sierra Leone, which coincided with its resumption in Liberia, and relates to the movement of RUF combatants who retreated from Sierra

Leone to join Charles Taylor's 'Special Forces' in Liberia against the LURD insurgency that started in 1999, and the corresponding movement largely of ex-CDF fighters to Liberia as well as Guinea, in particular to bolster LURD. The third period correlates with the period of the initial Ivoirian conflict (2002–2007), as Liberia's war was ending, with anti-Taylor forces, particularly former MODEL fighters, operating in eastern Côte d'Ivoire in support of pro-Gbagbo factions. Some pro-Taylor forces also rallied in support of anti-Gbagbo elements however, a pattern which was later repeated with the appearance of anti- and pro-Ouattara militias during the electoral crisis, which is the fourth period (2010–2012). The four periods are represented in Table A4.6 in Annex 4.

6.2. *Combatant motivations for moving to fight in the MRU region*

My findings on combatants' original motivations for fighting are much in keeping with the literature on myriad combatant motivations in West Africa discussed in Chapter 2. I also found that many of the reasons cited for moving to fight are reflected in initial motivations for fighting at home (noting also that not all combatants first fought at home). Interestingly, however, as Table 1 below shows, while some initial motivations map on to subsequent motivations, for the most part respondents cited multiple trajectories to participating in subsequent conflicts.

Table 1: Multiple trajectories to subsequent motivations

Original motivation/mobilisation	Motivation for moving
Involuntary conscript I (abducted [as a child]/arrested and pressed into service)	Escape from possible prosecution/ostracism
	Mourning parents' death during war
	Followed commander (too small/afraid to say no)
	Recruited for military prowess
	Friends joining – needed to show commitment to unit
	Reintegration too difficult
	No other trade to survive on
	Promised money
Involuntary conscript II (little other alternative but to join; revenge; afraid of life outside of group)	Continued revenge
	Continued anger at Pro-Taylor factions
	'Arrested' and taken to other war front
	Recruited for military prowess
	Followed commander ([fear of not] responding to direct order)
	No funds to support family/means of survival
	Help ethnic group stay in power/relatives complaining about situation
	Money
Voluntary conscripts (opportunistic)	Followed fellow combatants to fight
	Money/Loot/'free for all'
	No other job opportunities
	Go along or be killed
	Anger at Pro-Taylor factions
	Into 'bad life'
	Fighting for countrymen/ethnic brothers/wife's homeland
Professional soldiers	Friends from previous faction joining
	Escape from Sierra Leone after being associated with AFRC
	Prior fighting experience against same enemy (forced)
'Believers in the cause'	Platoon commander gave order
	Prior fighting experience against same enemy (volunteered)
	Prior experience in the country/region
	Income from existing work insufficient/ way to improve life at home
	No other means of survival
	Friends/former combatant colleagues joining
	Recruiters were 'paying much'; opportunities for looting

I find that my critique of the 'greed' motive notwithstanding, financial incentives played a significant role in most combatants' stated reason for moving to fight.

Table 2 below summarises these motivations as well as their stated frequency.

Table 2: Ex-combatants' stated motivations for moving to fight

Motivation	Particulars	# (Montserrado)	# (Grand Gedeh)
<i>Economic/Financial</i>	Money/Loot/Rice	5*	9*
	Money to support family, build house	-	3
	Poverty/Lack of alternative & reintegration opportunities/ means of survival	1	7
<i>Relational (military)</i>	Order/request from commanding officer	3	5
	'Forced' to go (arrested/ conscripted)	4	-
	Friends from faction going (relating to safety, acceptance, commitment to unit)	-	9
<i>Relational (ethno-social)</i>	Supporting ethnic kin	-	5
	Escape ostracism/prosecution	3	1
<i>Extension of conflict</i>	Take revenge on 'home' faction	2	-
	Extension of same conflict/cause	4	-
<i>Military expertise</i>	Prior conflict/area expertise	3	-
<i>Psycho-social</i>	'psychological issues' – loss; lack of direction; revenge killing	3	1

*not mentioned exclusively

Nevertheless, as the table also demonstrates, respondents also subscribed to a range of other motivations, including professional, socio-cultural (kinship) and socio-emotional (group identity) motivations, as well as motivations related to survival. Further, when espoused, financial incentives were hardly stated as being the sole motivating factor – they are almost always either justified with another factor (for instance kinship-based motivations), or couched in terms of a survival strategy. As one respondent summarised, 'I have relatives in Côte d'Ivoire that were complaining of the situation of government ruling and they [recruiters] offered me money' (Ex-combatant #33, Grand Gedeh). The following sub-sections explore each of these motivations in greater detail.

6.2.1. Economic/Financial incentives

‘I followed my friend combatants to fight and we were offered money’

- *Interview with Liberian ex-combatant #22 in Grand Gedeh*

‘I didn’t have a job after disarmament and needed to support my kids in school’

- *Interview with ex-combatant #32, Grand Gedeh*

The administration of former President Laurent Gbagbo has hired an estimated 4,500 mercenaries, mainly of Liberian origin . . . The majority of these mercenary forces originate primarily from the Nimba and Grand Gedeh counties of Liberia . . . Several reports suggest that they have been paid in advance of specific operations. Estimates range from CFAF 500,000 to 1,000,000 (US\$ 1,000–2,000) per operation

- *Excerpts from the Report of the Group of Experts on Côte d’Ivoire, April 2011*

As mentioned above, my earlier critique of the mercenary label and prioritisation of economic motivations notwithstanding, it is clear that many combatants who were involved in other countries’ conflicts engaged in excessive levels of looting and racketeering across borders (Silberfein and Conteh 2006; Human Rights Watch 2005; International Crisis Group 2002, 2003b). Further, in their analysis of regional combat, both the International Crisis Group (ICG) and Human Rights Watch (HRW) emphasise that contractual arrangements enticed many fighters, who were promised between US\$200 and US\$500 each to fight. As the quote above demonstrates, according to the Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire Panels of Experts, similar offers were made and accepted during the Ivorian 2010–2011 post-electoral crisis.

While half of the ex-combatants I interviewed were primarily motivated by economic reasons, and some even referred to themselves as ‘mercenaries’, it is important to note that even for this group, their motives largely related more to *survival* and the search for viable livelihood options for both them and their families in the face of limited post-conflict opportunities at home. Supplementing this view, in neighbouring countries in addition to fighting, ex-combatants were also involved in various economic activities including farming and alluvial mining, and as such, opportunities to participate in conflict could be considered as something of an effort to diversify

livelihoods.¹⁷ Thus, one could conclude that at these motivations are rooted in poverty and the absence of any real alternatives.

This issue cannot be overstated. The current occupations of many of my respondents gave fresh meaning to term manual labour. In Monrovia, most of my research was undertaken in West Point, a vast slum area comprising tightly packed houses along a narrow paved road, sandwiched between the ocean and the rest of the city. The livelihoods of many of the residents were connected to fishing, and some of my respondents earned their living from helping to haul in the fishing nets. Of my other respondents one crushed rocks; another cleaned out public pit latrines; yet another sold drugs. Others reported being unemployed or they stole, begged, hauled goods or worked in construction as a daily hire. When asked about what economic activity most ex-combatants were involved in, one FGD discussant wittingly responded, 'the Ministry of Hustle'. In Grand Gedeh, being more rural, there was a slight difference as several were farmers (although mainly subsistence, or contract workers on others' farms). Others were artisanal gold miners, others still, carpenters. But a good number reported doing odd jobs to survive, or being unemployed. My key informants further observed that many were habitual drug users. There were exceptions of course – one was a goldsmith, another a clerk at the ports authority, while another was a graphic artist; but for many, the prospect of cash up front, followed by further opportunities following a successful mission was invariably a strong pull.

6.2.2. Extension of conflict

'Misef decide say dis wan grain man way day go enh destroy, destroy, leh we put am behen. Leh we see if nahr im nahr di only iron way nohr dae cut' (I decided for myself that this man [Charles Taylor], who was responsible for all this war and destruction, had to be stopped. I thought, does he think he is the only one that iron can't cut? [i.e. does he think he's invincible?])

- Interview with ex-combatant #5, West Point, Monrovia

The above quote came from an interview with a Sierra Leonean ex-combatant who first volunteered with the Liberian-dominated ULIMO when it formed in Sierra Leone,

¹⁷ Based on mixed combatant/miners' focus group discussions in communities bordering Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire.

and then later took part as a CDF fighter, both times to contribute to putting an end to Charles Taylor and the RUF. He also went on to fight with LURD, having been recruited in Guinea as someone known for opposing Charles Taylor. His experience is not unique and various researchers have pointed to similarities in the composition of the armed groups that lined up against each other, whether in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, and even Guinea, such that traditional enemies such as the RUF and CDF of Sierra Leone continued to fight one another in Guinea, even after the conclusion of Sierra Leone's conflict, this time alongside Charles Taylor's government troops or LURD, respectively. The following example, summarised from ICG's 2002 report on the regional nature of Liberia's conflict, illustrates the complexity of this multi-sited 'civil' warfare, which effectively amounted to a series of proxy wars:

In 2000, after an attack on Guinea by RUF fighters at the behest of Charles Taylor to weaken LURD, President Conté moved to return the war back to Liberian soil by supporting the Donsos (Sierra Leone hunter militias from refugee camps in Guinea) and the LURD to pursue their enemies deep into Sierra Leone and Liberia. He provided further air and artillery support, and Guinean troops crossed into Sierra Leone. Guinean gunships bombarded several Sierra Leone and Liberian towns, obliterating Koindu, a major trading centre and RUF base in Sierra Leone . . . U.S. support for Guinea's military was increased, and Guinea greatly stepped up supply of the LURD. Kamajor and Donso fighters, freed by the lull in Sierra Leone, travelled via Freetown and Conakry to join the LURD invasion. The offensive, launched in mid-November 2000, advanced rapidly in Lofa County. In January 2001 the offensive turned east, driving for the centre of Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia movement, Gbarnga. Its success – killing hundreds of RUF, brought Donsos to within a few kilometres of the Kono diamond fields in Sierra Leone and took the LURD deep into Lofa County in Liberia. (International Crisis Group 2002: x)

Many of these Kamajors were from ethnic groups whose traditional lands span the Sierra Leone–Liberia border. As the ICG report puts it: 'militias such as the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) – effectively Liberian President Charles Taylor's foreign legion – the Sierra Leonean Kamajor "hunter" militias and a range of Liberian dissidents have battled with little regard for national borders' (International Crisis Group 2002: i). A similar situation arose with Liberians fighting in Côte d'Ivoire. A 2003 ICG study reported that 'western Côte d'Ivoire has become a new battleground in Liberia's war' (International Crisis Group 2003b: 24), with heavy fighting between the rebel MPIGO fighters, which included many Liberians and FANCI government troops who used mainly Krahns to lead the assault. The campaign was largely a Liberian affair

involving fighters from both the LURD and Taylor's Anti-Terrorist Unit. Pro-Taylor forces in Côte d'Ivoire also claimed that their fight was linked to the struggle to drive rebels out of Lofa County in Liberia, and the ICG hypothesises that this group saw themselves as 'part of an unfinished war that seems tied to Taylor's desire for a Greater Liberia' (ibid.: 26).

Of course there were exceptions, and even in my sample, there were individuals who had fought for NPFL and then with LURD in Guinea or with MODEL in Côte d'Ivoire, but these tended to be people who had been coerced into fighting for NPFL when they were children, often following the death of parents at the hand of the NPFL, and later saw an opportunity to fight against NPFL as a means of getting revenge.

6.2.3. Relational (ethno-social)

'There's no way the Krahn, Gio [sic] and Grebo who feel that Gbagbo is a brother to them will ever allow for Gbagbo people to suffer'

- *Participant, focus group discussion, 21 April 2013, Monrovia*

The dominance of the mercenary or financial incentive narrative notwithstanding, there is also widespread and increasing recognition that this alone has not been sufficient to mobilise fighters to take up arms in neighbouring countries. Because the kind of deep ethnic divisions that we see, for instance, in central Africa are not as evident in West Africa, this factor is usually only considered in passing in the literature. Yet, Silberfein and Conteh (2006) point out that many of the local anti-RUF militias were pulled into the LURD rebellion because of refugee flows and kinship ties, as well as pre-existing trade links and anti-Taylor orientation, as discussed above, stemming from their fight against the RUF at home. As noted in Chapter 2, Ferme and Hoffman observed that those CDF that moved across borders tended to comprise combatants with family ties on both sides of the border (2004: 78). Hoffman further notes that '[m]any fighters could claim, with more or less equal legitimacy, to be citizens of either Sierra Leone or Liberia. Liberian ex-combatants living for years in Sierra Leone, the children of Sierra Leonean traders who grew up in Monrovia, young men from border communities with parentage in both countries—all of these complex webs of biography made the very idea of a fixed, stable identity absurd' (Hoffman 2011b: 40).

Indeed, as demonstrated in Section 6.1, my interviewees demonstrated similar characteristics.

On the Liberia–Côte d’Ivoire border, ‘Ivorian Yacoubas, their Liberian Gio “cousins” and northern fighters and civilians (Dioula) were the targets of, and in turn targeted, the Ivorian Guéré and Liberian Krahn fighters and civilian populations, creating a cycle of inter-ethnic violence’ (International Crisis Group 2003b: 23). This cycle largely repeated itself in the 2010–2011 Ivoirian crisis. Post-crisis, this perspective has gained significant currency.

The ex-combatants in my study did apply kinship narratives to explain their activities, but they did this less often than peacebuilding discourse and popular opinion suggests. Individual respondents, especially in Grand Gedeh, did not mention this to as great an extent as anticipated. Instead, they seemed to reference it as an afterthought, as a means of justifying their activities. In the words of one ex-combatant (interviewee #36), *‘I fought to help protect my wife’s homeland and I was offered a huge sum of money’*. Accordingly, while they generally tended to align with ‘like’ factions – for instance groups that supported their home conflicts, and groups that were dominated by related ethnic groups – this should not necessarily be taken as a primary motivating factor, as is currently the vogue in terms of policy responses.

Indeed, for many commentators, policymakers and practitioners (including UNMIL staff, government ministry officials, UN Country Team staff, as well as among county administration and traditional authorities interviewed over the course of the research), an increasingly popular explanation is the importance of social and kinship ties, which have aligned fighters from one side of the border with their relations on the other side. As we will see in Chapters 9 and 10, this perception has heavily influenced peacebuilding practice but not necessarily for the better.

Notwithstanding, as could be expected for the reasons cited above, the Grand Gedeh group of respondents more than the Monrovia-based group subscribed to socio-emotional motivations and kinship ties. They further ascribed motivations to historical alienation and ongoing persecution of their kinsmen (*both* in Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire), as well as lack of effective post-conflict justice mechanisms, resulting in ‘victors’

justice' at their expense, both as ex-combatants and as people hailing from a particular ethnic group/region. These observations notwithstanding it is important to point out that, as shown in Table A4.6 in Annex 4, a good number of respondents who fought in Côte d'Ivoire did so on behalf of pro-Ouattara/anti-Gbagbo rebel groups (11, versus 16 who fought for pro-Gbagbo groups. This might be expected if the research had taken place in Nimba, the dominant county for Liberian Gios and Manos who supported Taylor against Doe, and are ethnically linked with Ivoirian Yacouba, who supported Ouattara (or at least were seemingly anti-Gbagbo) but is more surprising that this was reflected in Grand Gedeh, which is dominated by Krahns who are considered mostly pro-Gbagbo.

It should also be noted that while kinship factors did not feature as heavily as expected in individual interviews, it was discussed at length in most of my FGDs, both at the border *and* in Monrovia. As one participant explained during the discussion in Monrovia on 21 April 2013,

The war in Liberia and Sierra Leone came about like this. In 1989 when the war started in Liberia, here, first of all we got our brothers and sisters who lived in Sierra Leone . . . So when the war began in Liberia in 1989 in 1990 they left from there and came down and joined the other group that was here and all started fighting so when Liberia war came down like this and when the war started in Sierra Leone, they went back because they have some relationship between here and Sierra Leone. For example, my mother comes from Sierra Leone and my father from Liberia so I find myself leaving from Liberia to go to Sierra Leone and I find myself leaving from Sierra Leone to come to Liberia . . . So when the Sierra Leone conflict pick[ed] up they left from here and went there. . . . In Liberia in 199[1] after the first war eased down the war picked up in Sierra Leone our brothers left from here and went there . . . [we] learned [that] in Sierra Leone Doe [supporters were] down there also. Our brothers who left from here and went to Sierra Leone knew much about that [enemy] so they came on this side, gave the information and found other guys to go there.

For him, the explanation was twofold: firstly, that Sierra Leoneans and Liberians are essentially the same people, 'brothers and sisters', so it was not difficult to find Sierra Leoneans to participate in Liberia's conflict, and vice versa. Further, recalling the previous section, the refugees who fled to Sierra Leone, especially AFL who were being rearmed by the Sierra Leone Government, were still considered a threat, so Liberian rebels volunteered for the RUF rebellion as part of their fight against the same enemy.

However, as with the Grand Gedeh group, the same participant observed that very soon self-interest motivations became apparent:

They [Liberian fighters] found their own group and started fighting [in Sierra Leone] just to get some gold and diamond to bring in Liberia . . . So you find with the conflict in SL they [would] go there go and get something, pick up something of value, come here and sell it and spend the money.

During the same discussion, someone else noted that the gains from looting soon meant that cross-border fighting became a common practice. Another noted that such practices were still facilitated by familial links and have carried into the present, observing that ‘nowadays it’s also easy for people to commit a crime in one country then cross the border and melt into that society.’ Yet another commented: ‘[with] Liberia, Sierra Leone, if I have relations in the other country, if I cause trouble in one country, I can run next door and still be protected [murmur of agreement from the group] I feel our problem is stemming from that.’ Indeed, this emphasised a practicality of fighting across the border. As one Liberian ex-combatant told me during our interview on 21 May 2013, when he was fighting in Sierra Leone, he was not afraid of being identified as different because many people took him to be a Sierra Leonean (and indeed his mother’s family originated from Sierra Leone). An UNMIL colleague also narrated an experience in Guiglo, Côte d’Ivoire, in 2008 when they were trying to encourage Liberian ex-combatants to return. During a community meeting, elders insisted that the seeming Liberians among them were actually their sons and brothers, and when challenged over the fact that they spoke Liberian English, they asserted that this was easily explained as young people were frequently sent across the border to reside with relatives, and after a few months quickly picked up the lingua franca, whether Liberian English or French.

It is also worthwhile to note that FGD participants also attributed the influence of personal relationships at the highest levels as a significant contributing factor to regional conflict. In this they referred to Ivoirian President Houphouët-Boigny as the architect of conflict, noting his role in supporting Charles Taylor’s original insurgency based on his personal relationship with former President Tolbert who was killed by Doe. In the present, they referenced President Sirleaf’s ‘siding’ with President Ouattara (who was a senior official in Houphouët-Boigny’s government) as further evidence of

the Liberian Government's anti-Krahn sentiment, and a factor that also justified their involvement in the Ivorian crisis. These issues and their implications will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

6.2.4. Relational (military)

- [I moved to fight because] I was too small to say no
- *Interview with ex-combatant #16, Monrovia (Sierra Leonean)*

'When you are asked by your former commander to join a battle and you refuse, you become a targeted threat'

- *Interview with ex-combatant #42, Grand Gedeh*

The literature on conclusion of conflict in Liberia has often tried to ascertain the extent to which chains of command continue to exist, post-DDR. Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire Panels of Experts regularly asserted the continued importance of these structures, especially in relation to cross-border conflict (Panel of Experts on Liberia 2013a, 2012a, 2012b, 2011). In their November 2011 report, the Liberia Panel 'observed that Liberian mercenary command structures in the Ivorian conflict were fluid and relied on an alliance of generals who often activated their own recruits, mainly drawn from unemployed Liberian ex-combatants' (Panel of Experts on Liberia 2011: 3).

They tended to link these with access to external sources of funding, citing this once again as a major motivating factor. Certainly, as discussed above, finances play a large part, but in my research, several respondents discussed their inability to reject a direct order from a [former] commander, including due to fear, which speaks to a level of indoctrination and hierarchy that for some has yet to be rescinded in peacetime. One ex-combatant spoke of having no choice out of fear that something might happen to his family members if he refused to go and fight; another noted that if a planned attack failed due to an ambush, it could be presumed that combatants were responsible for leaking intel (especially if they had initially declined to go), and punished accordingly.

This particular aspect highlights a limitation of my research, mainly that it focused on rank and file ex-combatants and not, for instance, the brokers of violence, such as former commanders, or entrepreneurs of violence. As noted above, while I concur that

they are and should be a focus of study, this was balanced by my belief that the foot soldiers are also a critical part of the equation and equally worthy of study, as the ones that accept and carry out the missions, or who do the bulk of the fighting, and especially the importance of understanding how it is, as Ero and Temin note, that ‘political entrepreneurs can easily find a pool of willing recruits to challenge the central authority, many of them youths . . . rebel leaders prey on young, unemployed, impoverished groups and use them to engage in widespread attacks against their governments in order to obtain access to resources’ (Ero and Temin 2004: 113).

It should further be noted that this set of motivations may also be partly responsible for the apparent phenomenon of ex-combatants’ fluid loyalties, whereby their allegiance to one group or the other was mediated by commanders. Witnesses in Charles Taylor’s trial relate how ULIMO-K merged with NPFL while Taylor was President and supported the RUF to fight in Sierra Leone (around 1998). This may have come as a surprise to some, as they had received support from Guinea at the start of the war and had been engaged in the fight against the RUF in Sierra Leone. Taylor’s strategy, however, was to ‘look for one of the most senior officers in ULIMO-K to work along Sam Bockarie in Sierra Leone’.¹⁸ He contacted Abu Keita, who was Deputy Chief of Staff for ULIMO-K, through a former ULIMO-K member. Keita, while initially suspicious, accepted the offer to work alongside RUF’s Bockarie, after which it was assured that ULIMO-K fighters would be encouraged to join RUF offensives against Sierra Leone and Guinea. It should be noted also that even in this situation, there is some question as to the extent to which ULIMO-K fighters had allegiance to NPFL, as Taylor’s defence opined that Mandingo trial witnesses were working against Taylor even while in his Government, especially as LURD grew out of ULIMO-K (Trial of Charles Taylor Blog 2008).

6.2.5. Military expertise

‘I was on Mission. I was a Missionary’

- *Focus group discussion, Clara Town, Monrovia, 19 May 2013 (Liberian)*

¹⁸ Testimony of Varmuyan Sherif, former member of the Special Security Service and witness for the Prosecution at the trial of Charles Taylor on 9 January 2008
<https://charlestaylortrial.wordpress.com/2008/01/09/440/>, downloaded 20 March 2015.

- 'We bihn dae yahr as special forces' (We were here as special forces)*
 - Interview with ex-combatant #2, West Point, Monrovia (Sierra Leonean)

The main (other) set of motivations articulated by my respondents were capacity-based (to do with professionalism, capacity, and previous experience, i.e. 'professional soldier' narratives). These narratives convey a sense of professionalism and pride in being able to do something well. This latter point illustrates that the image of African mercenaries simply as marauding out-of-control forces that are only interested in, and get their sole benefits from, looting and pillaging is at least partially incorrect. While this was certainly a feature of their activities, it is also clear that they saw themselves primarily as contracted workers (Human Rights Watch 2005).

Thus, it is perhaps possible to conclude that these regional combatants, if labelled mercenaries, share at least some commonalities with their contracted western counterparts: no different, say, than the British ex-Special Air Services (SAS) officer now serving as a specialised private security contractor in Iraq. Evidence of this is found by Ferme and Hoffman (2004), who point out that Sierra Leonean militias became more professionalised and trained to what their officers perceived to be international standards that marked a legitimate fighting force, and then exported these standards to LURD when they joined them (although they then took a strategic decision to undermine these standards for reasons discussed below). Therefore, perhaps the case could be made to consider, for instance, the CDF as more akin to a foreign legion, or a force that transformed from civil to regional defence. Further, as Silberfein and Conteh (2006) and Human Rights Watch (2005) note, regional fighters saw themselves more as special forces carrying out missions than as mercenaries. Time and again my respondents used the term 'special forces' to refer to themselves, especially with regard to the Côte d'Ivoire conflict.

Silberfein and Conteh (2006) also mention that many fighters hoped to accumulate enough savings to invest in starting a business. This stated desire recalls Utas' (2003) and Richards' (2005) assertion that youth saw their involvement in the conflict as a way of attaining status independent of restrictive traditional social structures, one that they failed to achieve or regressed from, once their own countries' conflicts had

ended. This modernisation element – socialisation into urban culture, and disdain among youth about farming and rural livelihoods – is a well-documented feature of post-conflict settlement decision-making, but with a few exceptions (significantly Utas), this has not been investigated as a factor affecting motivations to fight, and certainly not taken into account in DDR programming, which often includes a significant agriculture component.

Hoffman (2011a) makes an important contribution to the discussion, wherein he draws attention to the nexus between violence and labour. In his view the conflicts in West Africa represent a ‘spatial and socio-political configuration, the purpose of which is to rapidly assemble male bodies for efficient deployment in overlapping service of security and profit’ (2011a: xii). In employing the ‘War Machines’ model, he asserts that becoming a regional warrior represented a vocation rather than some sectarian affiliation, and was just one among the limited choices young men in the region have available to them: ‘The men may be called up at any moment as laborers on the battlefield, workers on the plantation, or diggers in the mine’ (2011a: 164). Of direct relevance to this thesis, he considers the capture and reterritorialization of war machines, seeking to understand how for instance CDF was transformed into a mercenary army, and considering the transition of the conscription of ‘marginal urban youth into a disposable reserve army that was deployed across international borders’ (ibid.).

Hoffman’s ‘lack of alternative options’ model is an important one with which I concur. My main point of departure, however, is that he, like Weinstein, prioritises structure over agency and, like many others, largely limits motivations to ‘mercenary’. I observed that for my respondents, there was a sense of pride in being considered as a professional in some sphere. They were conscious that when they chose to go ‘on mission’ or to be part of ‘special forces’ they garnered particular respect from those they were going to fight alongside and the fear of the population. They also note that they were recruited for particular or special missions, not to fight in general but sometimes for those offensives that were considered particularly difficult – and while to others this may read as if they were dispensable, they chose to read this as evidence

of their fighting prowess and particular skillset. One respondent in Grand Gedeh was particularly known for his performance in the battlefield, so although he wished to retire he was always sought out for missions. Despite having a family and thoughts of escaping this life, possibly through migrating, it seemed that he genuinely enjoyed being called upon for something in which he was an expert.

6.2.6. Psycho-social

Many of the combatants I interviewed who had entered the war while they were young and who had experienced the loss of loved ones (mostly parents) also expressed an effective abandonment to the violence of conflict, whether at home or in another country. They also largely saw the opportunity to fight further afield as an opportunity for 'revenge' against an indeterminable enemy.

As predicted by the literature, some also committed atrocities where they came from and as such could not return home. For instance, one Grand Gedeh respondent joined NPFL when his mother was killed and when he went with them to his hometown, he committed a lot of atrocities, and so cannot return. Another noted that in Grand Gedeh his fellow ex-combatants can keep secrets or try to protect one another but this is not possible in Nimba where he came from.

My key informant in Grand Gedeh opined that for about half of the respondents, fighting was the only way they are able to 'enjoy life'. In his words, 'When they see themselves in that action, they feel like wow, it's nice'. He elaborated on the enjoyment that one of the interviewees seemed to derive from describing the action to him, with some going so far as trying to explain the pleasure they feel from being in combat. One also explained that to date, he feels the need to shed blood from time to time, and when he does not he begins to feel 'human' and thinks too much about the things he has done. Others noted that they do not feel part of society and are isolated, lacking any other skills or job. This was especially true of those who started to fight when they were young, who noted, 'If someone says, "come fight for me for one, two months," I will go'.

These interviewees could not really say who they had been fighting in aid of or who they had been fighting against and, as could be expected, did not have particular allegiance to any group, even at home. One of them who had fought for ULIMO-J also fought variously for *Forces Nouvelles*, *Front populaire Ivoirien* (pro-Gbagbo) and *Forces armées des forces nouvelles* (pro-Ouattara) groups. His reason for going to fight was ‘I had no established life in Liberia and was roaming about finding ways to survive . . . in the battlefield I can loot anything’. To some extent, this could be expected as a natural response to trauma.

6.3. Experience of DDR

‘I disarmed at Camp Suffering’
- Ex-combatant #5, Monrovia

The regional perspective is critical for DDR in the MRU sub-region, especially as many Sierra Leonean RUF and AFRC (ex-Sierra Leone army junta) combatants fled across the border to Liberia in 2000, in lieu of participation in Sierra Leone’s DDR (Benner et al. 2011), while Liberian participants in Côte d’Ivoire’s conflict anticipated more lucrative DDR benefits there than what they were able to obtain in Liberia.

Of my Sierra Leonean respondents, none disarmed only in Sierra Leone, seven disarmed only in Liberia, one disarmed in both places, and one disarmed nowhere at all. Of my Liberian/Sierra Leonean respondents, all four disarmed only in Liberia. Of my Liberian respondents in Montserrado, eight disarmed in Liberia and four disarmed nowhere at all. Finally, of my Liberian respondents in Grand Gedeh, 16 disarmed in Liberia, one disarmed only in Côte d’Ivoire, two disarmed in both places and six disarmed nowhere at all (i.e. 39 disarmed, 11 did not).

Of those who did not participate in Sierra Leone’s DDR programme, their main reasons related to listening to their leaders and lack of clarity over eligibility for DDR. Most did, however subsequently participate in the Liberian DDR, either participating as foreigners or masquerading as Liberians. Similarly, some Liberian ex-combatants had their weapons taken away by commanders, thus were unable to register for

programmes. Others were afraid of being stigmatised. Further, it should be noted that of the 39 that disarmed, some did not complete reintegration programmes, either because they were only interested in the money provided during the disarmament phase or because they were remobilised to fight elsewhere (mainly Côte d'Ivoire). Some actually interrupted their training to go and fight again, and even some of those that went through complete programmes still later went to fight in Côte d'Ivoire. All of those that went through the programme found fault with the level and type of training they received, and most make direct reference to it when discussing the reasons for their current adverse economic circumstances.

Notwithstanding, general consensus is that the Sierra Leonean and Liberian peace operations were at least qualified successes (Olonisakin 2008; Fortna 2008), with 76,000 and 103,000 individuals respectively participating in DDR process. For example, Olonisakin (2008) concludes that after a rocky start, UNAMSIL could be considered a successful model of multilateral peacekeeping, thanks to organisational learning both in the field and at UN headquarters, and the rendering of justice to the most notorious warlords. Yet, respondents' perspectives of DDR particularly resonate with much of the literature, as various studies have noted some shortcomings with programmes in both countries, stemming from their conception, structure and implementation (Solomon and Ginifer 2008; Human Rights Watch 2005; Humphreys and Weinstein 2004; Thusi and Meek 2003). For instance, Sierra Leone's disarmament was considered too rigid, disadvantaging traditional and pro-government militias who were denied entry. Also, during the demobilisation phase, the encampment period was considered too short to effect any substantial and sustained change in behaviour and attitudes, and effectively break up existing command and control structures amongst the armed factions (Solomon and Ginifer 2008). A UNDP staff member noted in an interview that this period was meant to last three months in Liberia but was reduced to just a month.¹⁹ Reintegration programmes were considered to be western-conceived, poorly funded, coordinated and monitored, and delivered poor-quality training in jobs there was no demand for, particularly given the depressed post-conflict economies; programmes

¹⁹ Interview, May 2010

focused mainly on economic reintegration at the expense of social and political integration (United Nations Mission in Liberia 2007a; Silberfein and Conteh 2006).

The limitations highlighted in the literature were especially relevant in the regional context. Ferme and Hoffman (2004) note that in Sierra Leone, unmet expectations of DDR programmes and pressure from patrons with a vested interest in overthrowing Taylor's regime made demobilised combatants more susceptible to the offers made by recruiters to fight abroad, while the International Crisis Group (2003b) asserts that as a consequence of the Sierra Leone DDR programme's failure disarm a core of (RUF) hardliners, many combatants opted out of DDR programmes altogether, preferring instead to move with their guns to fight with Taylor against LURD. This decision to avoid disarmament in favour of cross-border combat was not limited to the RUF. Ferme and Hoffman (2004: 78) note that the formal end to combat in Sierra Leone brought about a deeper division between the demobilising elements and the professionalised segments of the CDF, many of whom crossed to Liberia and Guinea to support LURD. The lack of a regional disarmament strategy meant that the fighters that moved to Liberia could not be targeted, a shortcoming that was replicated at the end of Liberia's second conflict in 2003, after which many Liberian and Sierra Leonean fighters moved on to Côte d'Ivoire. The situation was 'further complicated by the expectation that soldiers could collect more than twice the \$300 stipend available in Liberia once demobilization in the Côte d'Ivoire was underway' (Silberfein and Conteh 2006: 350).

These shortcomings were all evident in my ex-combatant respondents' experiences with DDR, which was uniformly considered problematic by respondents and focus group discussants alike. Most of the ex-combatants related their current lack of opportunities to the failures of the DDR programmes, *whether they participated or not*. In addition to limited material benefit (e.g. a \$150 initial reinsertion grant) and the paucity of appropriate programmes, ex-combatants commonly cited the short cantonment periods (failure to provide alternatives to 'gun language'), the lack of longer-term psychosocial support, and the lack of empowerment – political and social, in addition to economic. It was also depressingly coincidental that most respondents referred to Camp Scheffelin, the primary cantonment site for DDR in Monrovia which

is also a military barracks, as 'Camp Suffering'. Although this is a common mistake among Liberians, it was clear through conversation that the misnomer was well-earned, and the place had become something of a symbol of everything that was wrong with Liberia's DDR programme.²⁰

In keeping with the general argument of this study, which will be developed further in later chapters, studies on DDR have demonstrated that reasons for their limitations are at least partly related to poorly understood combatant motivations: Bøås and Hatløy (2008) observe that with regard to Liberia, a failure to understand combatants' motivations during wartime led to poorly thought-out reintegration programmes in peacetime. A 2007 UNMIL evaluation of the DDR programme found that the reintegration options made available to ex-combatants were supply rather than demand-driven; that the programme appeared to equate training and education with reintegration, contrary to the UN's definition of it as a process; and that its focus on 'economic' reintegration came at the expense of psycho-social assistance (United Nations Mission in Liberia 2007b). Similarly, basing their conclusions on ex-combatant interviews, Solomon and Ginifer critique Sierra Leone's DDR as 'a foreign-driven exercise that largely ignored the needs and concerns of local communities and ex-combatants' (2008: 4), further noting that '[p]rogramming decisions did not appear to be based on information on ex-combatants' needs and viable opportunities in local communities' (ibid: 5).

These observations resonated with my study participants. As one focus group discussant²¹ summed it up: 'After the war the disarmament processes was not conducted rightfully. [This was] the first shortcoming/failure [or reason for ongoing] instability in four countries. You cannot carry someone who has stayed 15 years fighting – the only language the man understands is the language of the gun, you carry

²⁰ The DDR programme was launched by the Liberian National Commission on Demilitarization, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (NCDDRR) and its international partners at Camp Scheffelin in December 2003. The programme had failed to prepare for the overwhelming demand, however, and the resulting chaos led to nine deaths and the programme being temporarily suspended.

²¹ Youth Intellectual Forum, 21 April 2013, Westpoint.

the man three days in the cantonment site and give him \$100 [*sic*] the man is not transformed. He is not transformed. Never transformed’.

6.4. Motivations as social constructs

I think that ex-combatants cast narratives about themselves that enable them to be active participants in violent conflict and inducing war and mayhem. They see it almost as a war game; not zero-sum, you go on a mission you collect your bounty, you come back. There is a kind of impersonality about the whole thing. It lends itself to people absenting themselves; they talk about it by glossing over the details. While intensely personal, they focus on things they were promised and things they hoped to achieve or get, rather than the things they did to achieve what they wanted to. I struggle with this because you talk to very personable and sweet [people] actually but [they] have been responsible for doing terrible things.

- My research diary, 15 December 2013

In her chapter on dialogic/performance analysis, Riessman (2008) tells us that ‘[s]tories . . . are composed and received in contexts – interactional, historical, institutional, and discursive . . . are social artefacts, telling us as much about society and culture as they do about a person or group’. She notes further that ‘[w]e are forever composing impressions of ourselves, projecting a definition of who we are, and making claims about ourselves and the world that we test out and negotiate with others’ and in so doing we create ‘identities that are situated and accomplished with audience in mind’ (2008: 106).

Bøås and Jennings (2008) extend Riessman’s perspective to explanations of regional conflict, noting that

A meta-narrative is . . . understood as the outcome of processes of storytelling. All of us tell stories, and by telling stories we define the world and our place within it. As acts of self-definition, this storytelling takes place within a pre-established framework: it can constitute, mould or break this framework, but it will always be conditioned by it. Most of these stories are first and foremost important for the practice of everyday life, but, when combined with perceived experiences of grievances (political and/or economic), they can be combined to form powerful meta-narratives about ‘self’ and ‘other’. Thus, a meta-narrative is the supposedly transcendent and universal truth about a collective ‘self’ and its relationship to other ingroups (e.g., ‘others’). The power of the meta-narrative is, therefore, located in its empowerment of those regionalising actors who ‘master’ them to integrate a wider set of memories, experiences and aspirations in a perceived coherent whole. The politics of memory is, therefore, an integral dimension in the construction of meta-narratives. (Bøås and Jennings 2008: 155)

The idea that narrative plays a significant role in constructing combatant motivations is well documented, or at least demonstrated in the literature. Research such as Humphreys and Weinstein (2008) is useful for showing differences between ex-combatants' perceptions about themselves and which they want to portray, and what actually happened. An example is their finding that while only 12 percent voluntarily signed up to the RUF, the majority of RUF combatants report their marginalisation as the reason for participating in the conflict. Similarly, although CDF fighters mostly joined to defend their communities, they also cite marginalisation.

The motivations for moving articulated above, including 'mercenary', 'missionary' and 'kinship', could also be considered meta-narratives. Added to these in the post-conflict context are the narratives of the 'ex-combatant' and, at least in Liberia, 'marginalised youth'. This section therefore considers the social construction of combatant motivations, especially with regard to how ex-combatants understood and promoted their participation in neighbouring countries' conflicts.

6.4.1. The social construction of an 'ex-combatant' identity

From reading (or listening to) narratives of combatants, it is clear that these are socially constructed, depending on the narrator, the person being narrated to, the theoretical bent of the person being narrated to, and the circumstances of the narration. Because all narratives may be considered socially constructed, ex-combatants' social construction of motivations other than predominant economic incentives are at least as important in terms of self-motivation and justification, especially as the repeated performance of these alternative models in turn entrenches combatants' sense of, respectively, disenfranchisement, pride, exclusion, comradeship, and so on. As discussed in subsequent chapters, failure to understand this has potentially grievous implications for regional conflict resolution efforts. Exploring the ways in which regional ex-combatants' identities are crafted is particularly relevant in a context where, as noted above, their motivations and identities are generally limited to 'mercenary', and where peacebuilding responses have made little effort to problematise these other motivations, or even simply unpick them.

Apparent during my fieldwork was the co-construction of the various narratives, especially evident during the focus group discussions. This and the relational motives

highlighted the persistence of a common group identity among (ex-)combatants, post-conflict. Yet, while combatants are commonly accepted as a group for study, after conflict ends, peacebuilders do not generally consider them to constitute a cohesive identity. This is problematic because, as noted in Chapter 2, ‘for demobilized fighters, the most salient identity is the group identity they share as members of an ex-combatant community’ Nilsson (2008: 13). This is relevant because the ‘causes of war’ literature tells us that groups of individuals contemplating engaging in organised violence have a much greater chance of succeeding if they share a common identity. Without such an identity, be it in their ethnicity, religion, regionalism, ideology or something else, disgruntled individuals will not perceive that they are facing a common problem, which they can collectively work to overcome (Black 2008).

As such, it is important for regional peacebuilders to pay attention to collectively constructed narratives, which could provide the impetus for former combatants to take up arms as has occurred in West Africa, but to note also that these may not fall into neat categories with clear-cut responses. The kinship narrative deserves further attention here. Black (2008: 161) notes: ‘kinship is a highly charged cultural category in many communities and often becomes the basis for total social identity . . . family and kinship often serve as the ground from which springs a rich harvest of deeply felt metaphors for other social identities’. As noted above, many of my Grand Gedeh respondents identified as Krahn, inasmuch as some were mixed. In Liberia, being a Krahn at the same time means being a Doe supporter; anti-Taylor; a founder of ULIMO and MODEL; an opponent of the current Liberian administration; a brother of the Ivoirian Guéré; a trouble-maker; and so on. These were narratives that came up time and again in individual interviews and focus group discussions, among ministry officials, etc, in response to Krahns being tried for mercenarism (see Chapter 7). This was simultaneously considered a source of pride and victimisation by my respondents, which enabled them to justify crossing the border to fight in Côte d’Ivoire. It is important to note here that here respondents’ use of the word kinship is purposeful and relates to its academic sense – it means more than ethnic group affiliation, and is more an expression of social identity based on the ‘exclusionary hold of bonds which

are believed to be based on the most intimate details of birth and marriage' (Black 2008: 161).

Yet, mobilisation of the kinship narratives must be taken with a large pinch of salt, especially given the prevailing mix of selective incentives and socio-emotional motivations for cross-border combat. Across the literature on motivations to fight is the tension between individual motivations and actions, and the wider social and institutional context. This is reflected in Utas' idea of 'enchantments with modernity' (2003: 39), which results in 'a social landscape where the trajectories of tradition and modernity are continually being negotiated and contested' (ibid.), and Richard's hypothesis that conflicts in both countries were partly a revolt by the agrarian underclass (Richards 2005). Notwithstanding the appeal to kinship motives, it is therefore possible to consider the economic motivations underpinning regional combat as efforts by regional combatants to escape traditional forms of social cohesion (or for young people, oppression), in the face of an elite that was increasingly unable to provide adequate patronage. For the majority of ex-combatants, at the end of their countries' conflicts this effort to break free of these traditions remained an incomplete process. This meant that despite this social currency of kinship narratives, peacebuilding practices that reinforce traditional authority structures, for instance, are not going to adequately address motivations.

Another example with which to sound a note of caution is the appeal of the mercenary narrative by ex-combatants themselves. They appear to marshal the mercenary narrative as a 'securitisation' narrative, and a means of staying relevant (current); it may be read as a (partially successful) attempt to appear more important than they recognise themselves to be. The missionary/mercenary narrative could also be considered a means of reclaiming agency – a sense of pride and belonging, of being a professional, of being good at something, hence the frequent references to being 'special forces', 'a good fighter' and so on.

Black notes, '[o]f course, all identities, all selves, are multifaceted . . . These attributes are drawn on both by the individual and by others to understand just who she or he is' (2008: 148). Following this, we must ask what the outcome of these narratives is. From my research, it is apparent that the ex-combatant narrative continues to affect/drive

justification for participation in cross-border activities, and is especially potent when paired with kinship and marginalisation narratives. The narrative persists for a variety of reasons, particularly because of continued (and perceived as deliberate) disempowerment of ex-combatants, or a lack of justice against the people that led them to sacrifice their youth in war (e.g. bitterness about lack of follow-up on Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) recommendations that advocated for commanders to be brought to justice – as one of my respondents noted, ‘only the youth suffer’). In a nutshell, as per the framework presented in Chapter 4, to understand motivations as narrative involves inter-subjectivity of social meanings, and not understanding this inter-subjectivity, or indeed that motivations are necessarily socially constructed, limits the ways in which people understand, interpret and develop responses to what they have been told, as will be demonstrated in Chapters 9 and 10.

6.5. Conclusion

The preceding discussion highlights that combatant motivations are more complex than the ‘financial incentives’ motivations often ascribed to their actions by national and international peacebuilding entities. While the literature on fighters who move to fight supports this view by concentrating on selective incentives, and almost exclusively on mercenary tendencies, my research demonstrates that ex-combatants have constructed a range of narratives beyond the material (or mercenary) that explain (or justify) their reasons for moving to fight. While invariably each of these includes an element of monetary gain, they are hardly ever exclusively couched as such. Neither are they mutually exclusive. In some cases, their initial reasons for fighting will have some implications for their motivations for moving to fight; for others it relates to memories of loss, or the need for revenge; yet others subscribe to the brothers-in-arms narratives; and others still subscribe to such considerations as providing for one’s family, lack of alternative opportunities, and feelings of helplessness. Further, the application of (cross-border) socio-cultural motivations means – at least to the outside observer – that they should not necessarily be identified as ‘foreign’ combatants, which is important for how they mediate the post-

conflict world in their non-native country. This is supported by the limited literature on the topic, which indicates that factors beyond material (or mercenary) motivations influenced decisions about moving to fight. These include kinship ties and social networks.

From a conflict resolution perspective, greed over grievance theory predicts that opposing sides will only agree to negotiations if the costs of war are perceived to be higher than the costs of peace. These considerations featured prominently in the policy perspectives of foreign governments and international organisations that sponsored peace negotiations and peace operations in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, which variously (at first) rewarded potential spoilers (such as Foday Sankoh and Charles Taylor) with senior government positions and implemented DDR programmes that prioritised the economic reintegration of ex-combatants. As demonstrated above, however, motivations relate to a myriad of economic incentives and socio-political grievances. Thus, we should be able to concur that it is also relevant to query whether, particularly given the persistence of regional instability, spanning four countries and over two decades, whether the post-conflict environment has successfully addressed the underlying social, political, governance and economic issues that has motivated belligerents to participate in multiple conflicts.

Additionally, peacebuilders must engage with the appeal to socio-emotional and socio-cultural narratives but, as the preceding discussion demonstrates, this engagement must be nuanced to reach an understanding of the purpose and function of the narrative if didactic and prescriptive solutions are to be avoided. The next chapter expands on these narratives, buoyed by the collective, and in keeping with the framework's consideration of the new regionalisms approach. It reinforces the assertion in this chapter that while economic motivations are important, combatants are also able to draw on kinship ties and social identities, but at the same time cautions against a simplistic understanding of these motivations. This precedes a discussion on resulting peacebuilding practice addressed in Chapters 8 to 10, highlighting their limitations, stemming from the constrained understanding of the narratives discussed in this chapter and the next, as well as the rigid nature of

international peace operations, which contributes to their inability to address regional conflict adequately.

7. Insecure spaces: exploring the dual narratives of kinship and exclusion in Liberia's borderlands

In 2010 when I undertook my fieldwork scoping study I decided to travel to Liberia by road from Sierra Leone. I was to be accompanied by our Sierra Leonean driver, who wanted to visit his Liberian father who was ill in Monrovia, along with his younger brother, who was to remain in Liberia for a while. I travelled on my Sierra Leonean national passport but was assured by various authorities in Freetown (that is, the Sierra Leone Police, Department of Transport and Liberian Embassy officials) that my driver would not need a national identification document (he did not possess one) and that the travel certificate I had obtained for the vehicle would cover him. I was again assured of this in Gendema, the immigration checkpoint on the Sierra Leone side of the border, where we obtained a *Laissez-passer* (a paper travel document) for his brother, and withstood half-hearted efforts at bribes. Upon crossing to Bo Waterside, the Liberian side of the border, however, we were refused entry by Liberian immigration authorities, who scoffed at the idea that we should have imagined that the car's documents could possibly cover the driver and sent us back across the bridge of the Mano River (from which the Union takes its name) to obtain a *Laissez-passer* for the driver as well. On our return, we were taken through an extremely laborious process, and car documentation notwithstanding were only permitted to proceed after several calls to my host, who was able to reach someone senior enough to compel them to let us go, but not before I had been divested of US\$10 to retrieve my passport from an overzealous (read corrupt) immigration health official.

Several weeks later I stood at the border post at Yekepa in Nimba County, and border officials again asked for US\$10 to 'process my passport' before I could be allowed to cross, this time into Guinea. Pointing to the two market women who had just clambered off the back of a motorcycle taxi coming from Guinea to the market day in Yekepa and started off into Liberia without so much as a glance at the immigration officers, I asked the officials why the women were not subject to border controls while I, who was as much an ECOWAS citizen as they, was. They laughingly informed me that there was a difference between ECOWAS citizens from the vicinity, who were considered just as people from neighbouring villages and who moved back and forth

between the borders on a daily basis, and as such could not seriously be considered subject to border controls, and those, like myself, from further afield. Abandoning my quest for a free pass into Guinea I chased after the market women to ask in my halting French how often they came to Liberia. I was met with blank stares and after several seconds of miscommunication they responded to me in Liberian English that while they were Guinean they could not speak French, only English and their local language.

What is the point of these stories? On the one hand, they demonstrate how interconnected the peoples in the countries that make up the Mano River Union are, with families scattered throughout the sub-region (shortly after Nimba I went to Sinoe County where I met for the first time one of my grandmother's younger sisters, who like my grandmother was born there but unlike her had lived in Liberia all her life). This interconnectedness is even more pronounced in border areas. I witnessed countless examples of this in the course of my research: in a taxi from the Bo Waterside border one woman turned to her left and spoke effortlessly in Liberian English then to her right and spoke fluent Krio to her sister who she was bringing to Liberia for the first time. I observed two children walking, unaccompanied, using a bush path to bring a cow from Guinea to sell at the meat market in Kono in Sierra Leone, and by chance saw them a few days later, returning home cow-less. In Zimmi, a Sierra Leonean border town with Liberia, when I tried to pay for something, the traders asked if I had US dollars, preferring to receive this currency over Leones, as their closest markets were in Liberia, which used US dollars alongside the Liberian dollar.

On the other hand, my experiences also highlighted the exploitative and sometimes conflictual relationships that ordinary citizens have with border security agents, often the sole representatives of the states in these areas, even as these officials recognise the fluid and practically uncontrollable ebb and flow of population movements across national borders: they turn a blind eye to cross-border traffic, despite the borders being officially closed (for instance during the 2014 Ebola crisis that affected Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone). Female cross-border traders report that for them, harassment by border security officials on both sides of the border, rather than armed

conflict, presents the most significant cross-border security threat.²² The Liberian government readily acknowledges that there are an estimated 131 unofficial border crossing points, compared to 45 official ones (Office of the Senior Inspector 2015a, 2015b), many of which are either completely unmanned or inadequately monitored.

This chapter explores borders as sites of conflict in the Mano River region in the context of the combatant motivations and narratives discussed in the previous chapter. It focuses mainly on the Liberia–Côte d’Ivoire border, but also draws insights from research on Liberia’s other borders with Sierra Leone and Guinea. It aims to respond to the conceptual framework’s call to examine these within the historical, political, economic and social dynamics of regional conflict. While it naturally enhances the discussion on kinship identities and narratives of exclusion, building on such studies as Hoffman (2011a, 2011b), and Utas (2003), it also contributes to discussions on narratives regarding young men’s use of their main asset – their capacity for labour – to fulfil their transnational aspirations to break free from economic disadvantage and the constraints of tradition, as well as the tensions these efforts create with more traditional identity narratives.

Accordingly, Section 7.1 elaborates on border areas as micro-regions, recalling the conceptual framework that incorporates a new regionalisms approach, and highlighting associational and ethnic relations as one factor that drives this micro-regional conflict. It also elaborates on the example of Grand Gedeh border communities at the margins of the state and society, and the ways in which ethnic relations are marshalled in violent support of ‘kin’ in this micro-region. Section 7.2 considers refugee camps at borders as a microcosm of the foregoing considerations, and as specific sites of combatant recruitment, something that has been well documented in central Africa but much less understood in West Africa. Section 7.3 problematises the foregoing, noting the limitations of this focus, especially in light of emerging cross-border threats. Specifically, it examines the evidence of cross-border combat related to other factors peculiar to border regions, relating it particularly to other types of movement, mostly in search of better income opportunities (i.e. as a

²² Women’s focus group discussion at second Joint Council of Chiefs and Elders Meeting, January 2016.

form of labour migration). Through this interrogation of prevailing narratives around kinship and economic opportunities, it begins to consider their implications for peacebuilding actors, the fuller discussion of which will take place in subsequent chapters. Section 7.4 concludes.

Many sources of data informed this chapter. In addition to the ex-combatant interviews and focus group discussions elaborated on in the previous chapter, the discussion below draws on fieldwork undertaken in Liberia's regions bordering Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire to examine borders as the nexus of cooperation and conflict in West Africa. It utilises focus group data from mining camps and refugee communities near the Sierra Leonean and Ivoirian borders; interviews with UNMIL, Liberian Refugee, Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) staff and Liberia Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization (BIN, now Liberia Immigration Service (LIS)) officials; transcripts from a Mercenarism court case hearing in Liberia, in which all but one of the defendants were from Grand Gedeh; and participant-observation from working on this issue while at UNMIL, including meetings and conversations with both Ivoirian and Liberian national security officials, visits to Ivoirian refugee camps, analysis of grey literature, and informal discussions.

7.1. *Border areas as micro-regions*

As noted in Chapters 3 and 4, regional peace and security approaches remain state-led, maintain a focus on physical security, and inadequately conceptualise region in regional peace and security theories. In contrast, new regionalisms and borderlands literature encourage a commensurate focus on non-state aspects, and the interactions between them, including in the context of regional conflict. This is especially relevant in Africa's micro-regions – those regions that exist between the national and local levels and which were traditionally considered within the boundaries of the nation-state but now increasingly straddle state boundaries (Söderbaum and Taylor 2008a).

This is reflected in the borders and borderlands literature by developed by Feyissa and Hoehne (2010) from which the title of this chapter is borrowed. They distinguish borderlands – territorially defined physical space along both sides of the border – from borders, i.e. the institution of inter-state division according to international law (2010:

1), highlighting borderlands as fields of opportunity for the people inhabiting them. Accordingly, they ‘examine the (sometimes conflicting) (re)bordering and border-crossing processes within which the agency of the borderlanders is situated’ and ‘emphasize the multiple possibilities engendered by marginal spaces and being marginal’ (2010: 2).

Grant (2008: 105) postulates something similar for the MRU in his elaboration of the ‘Parrot’s beak’, where Guinea’s southern border converges with the Sierra Leone and Liberia borders (incidentally the area where initially Ebola emerged and spread in West Africa). He concurs that regions are ‘imagined communities’ (ibid.: 108), noting that ‘[b]oth within and outside the Mano river basin identities based on conceptions of nationality, ethnicity, language, religion and symbols are in constant flux . . . Individuals may have multiple identities, which overlap and change over time’ (ibid.).

One statistic about cross-border ethnicities is that four in ten Africans today belong to an ethnic group that has kin across borders. Another is that at least 177 ethnic groups are split into two or more countries by existing nation-state boundaries (Mungai 2015). The MRU is not exempt. Table 3 and Figure 3 below demonstrate some of the overlaps.

Table 3: Common ethnic groups with overlaps in the Mano River Union

Côte d’Ivoire	Guinea	Liberia	Sierra Leone
Mende	Mandéyi	Mende, [Vai, Gola]	Mende [Gola]
Mandinka	Malinké	Mandinka/Mandingo	Mandingo
	Kissi	Kissi	Kissi
	Limbanyi		Limba
Soussou			Susu
Krouman (incl. Guéré)		Kru, Grabo/Grebo (including Krahn)	Kroo
Fula / Peulh	Peulh (Fula/Fullah)		Fula/Fullah
	Guerze/Kpelle	Kpelle	Kono
	Loma	Lorma	
Yacouba (Dan)		Gio (Dan)	
Wee, Guéré, or Wobe		Krahn, Sapo	

Sources: Poole and Mohamed 2013: 16; author’s research.

Figure 3: Major Ethno-linguistic groups in ECOWAS

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/50/Niger-Congo_map.png/635px-Niger-Congo_map.png

As discussed in Chapter 6, ethnicity and kinship have been mobilised as an identity narrative to support participation in cross-border conflict. Against this backdrop, the next section explores in greater detail these narratives within the concept of the Liberian–Ivoirian border as a micro-region (or indeed several micro-regions), focusing especially on the Grand Gedeh County–Toulépleu Prefecture area.

7.1.1. On the margins: Liberian–Ivoirian border micro-region

The Mano River Union has several micro-regions. For this study, this section focuses on the Liberia–Côte d’Ivoire borderland, and specifically the areas incorporated by Grand Gedeh, River Gee and Maryland Counties on the Liberian side, and the Toulépleu and San Pedro Prefectures on the Ivoirian side. These are areas with historical ethnic interlinkages, enhanced by exchange of populations, including refugees, resulting firstly from the Liberian crisis in the 1990s and early 2000s, and then from the Ivoirian conflict from 2002–2007 and again in 2010–2011, of which there were 18,552 remaining in December 2016 (UNHCR 2017). This population exchange has also included combatants and militias. (I have excluded Nimba County from this analysis because although it also borders Côte d’Ivoire, its people are more closely aligned with a different ethnic group, and because Charles Taylor’s NPFL drew early supporters from Nimba, people from this group fought in Côte d’Ivoire on the side of the rebels and later Ouattara supporters, sometimes engaging directly in conflict against people from Grand Gedeh).

Speaking of northern and western Uganda, Bøås and Jennings (2008) elaborate on how combative 'state-society relations' (Söderbaum and Taylor 2008a: 30) can help shape and give meaning to certain identities. They note that political and economic marginalisation has resulted in 'meta-narratives that have contributed to rendering these areas into chronic cross-border micro-regions of conflict' (Bøås and Jennings 2008: 155). They further note that '[t]hese micro-regions of conflict are set in motion by the elaboration, contestation and manipulation of meta-narratives of identity, power and betrayal, and their spread across borders is facilitated by the particular pathologies and failings that may grow out of the neo-patrimonial state (ibid.: 154). As such, 'regions are negotiated and (re)articulated through social practices informed by meta-narratives of pasts and presents' (ibid.: 155), 'revolving around issues such as betrayal, resistance, sacrifice and security' (ibid.: 150).

Specifically, in relation to cross-border conflict, Bøås and Jennings argue that

cross-border micro-regions of conflict can best be defined in terms of speech acts (Shapiro 1981), as multiple interpretations of the region struggle, clash, deconstruct and displace one another (Neumann 2003). These regions are thus first and foremost social constructions. They are imagined by regionalising actors and constructed through social practices based on the meta-narratives that are formed by these imaginations in the context of pre-established frameworks of storytelling. The region is made up of moving bodies and, as such, is lived social space, but this space is given direction by regionalising actors and the meta-narratives at their disposal (Bull and Bøås 2003). By lived social space, we mean the sum of social practices and discourses that exist within a certain physical or virtual space. (Bøås and Jennings 2008: 154)

The following account demonstrates the salience of these perspectives in the micro-region under study:

In December 2015, the Grand Gedeh County Council of Elders produced what they called a White Paper titled 'The Case Against Holding Celebrations of Independence Day'²³ (July 26 2016) Birth Anniversary of the Republic of Liberia in and by Grand Gedeh

²³ Every year a different county or several counties are responsible for holding annual Independence Day celebrations, attended by the President and different dignitaries, including members of the international community. Given the poor road networks and infrastructure (including accommodation) and the centralised nature of funding, most counties find it very difficult to host the event, especially against the expectations that they have to do their county proud, and they spend much of the year leading to the event trying in vain to get their county ready for the 'honour'. In any case the celebration was not held in Grand Gedeh.

County' (Grand Gedeh County Council of Elders, Inc 2015). They began by noting the difficulty of hosting such an event at the height of the rainy season, especially as the county was often cut off from the rest of the country during this period due to the poor road network, leaving it 'conspicuously isolated' (ibid.: 7), and the unsuitability of the capital to think of holding such an event in Grand Gedeh, given the dearth of infrastructure and appropriate lodging. They go on to note how the county had been laid waste by the 'uncivil war' and how it had 'suffered the worst . . . in relative terms, of the deadly and near-total destruction of its human resource, fabric of its society, and economic infrastructure' by the NPFL (ibid.: 16). They elaborate on the adverse effects of 'NPFL occupation' which are still today 'present, visible and troubling', including the decision to create another county, partly out of Grand Gedeh; the insult of having critical law enforcement functions controlled by officials imported into the county; and the remittance of foreign investments from the county to central government with no tangible benefits accruing to the county. They then asserted that 'justice delayed is justice denied' over the upholding of a guilty verdict of 13 Grand Gedeh citizens, convicted on mercenary charges for participating in cross-border attacks against Côte d'Ivoire in 2011 and 2012, even though five people had been acquitted on the basis of the same evidence (this trial will be discussed further in Chapter 10). They interpreted the verdict as a political trial by the current Liberian Government, geared towards pleasing the present Ivoirian Government of President Ouattara, in return for its aiding and abetting Charles Taylor's NPFL 'in its illegal invasion and near destruction of Grand Gedeh County' and ascribing remarks of the former Minister of Internal Affairs in Johnson-Sirleaf's government as analogous to the government claiming that 'Grand Gedeans are mercenaries.'

I have elaborated on this communication because it concisely captures the often-repeated sentiments of marginalisation and vilification expressed by so-called 'Grand Gedeans' or Grand Gedeh citizens as they describe themselves (notably, rather than Liberian citizens), stemming from the very beginning of Liberia's conflict and continuing to the present day, due to their affiliation with former President Doe. An interesting aspect of this is that an equal level of hostility is directed at the Liberian government *and* the Ivoirian government, rooted in both historical and current events.

During a focus group discussion, one participant told me: ‘NPFL passed through Côte d’Ivoire. If war is coming it wouldn’t have been in secret. There would have been meetings, the [Ivoirian] government of the day would have to know so through Côte d’Ivoire government support, war was able to come to the country. Maybe they had differences with the Doe regime [which contributed to] the fact that they allowed people to cross and destabilise the sub-region.’²⁴ The sentiment was updated to match the situation during the Ivoirian civil war and, in citizens’ views, perpetrated in the aftermath of post-electoral crisis. As the same participant went on to note:

‘Another problem in Côte d’Ivoire . . . the international community needs to do [better] as [they are] turning blind eye to what’s happening in Côte d’Ivoire. While [it is] true [that] Ouattara won elections . . . those being hunted are those from Gbagbo area. The two factions committed crimes but the international community is ignoring that. Ouattara is now chasing Gbagbo people while Gbagbo is in The Hague and the international community is not telling Ouattara that the peace you fought for in your country is right before you, you have to do the rightful thing. If you keep hunting Gbagbo people you will not have peace . . . These tribes, Grebo, Krahn . . . all across and along border. All are inter-related. If Gbagbo, who is Bété, who speak[s the] Kwa language – other Kwa speaking people are sympathetic. I am telling you there are people in Maryland County who have their quarters [homes] in Côte d’Ivoire [they are] more like family. They are Grebo people. If someone dies they go across the Cavalla River and sympathise – family. So the problem . . . I want to tell the international community that we need to tell the Ivoirian community to stop hunting the people from Gbagbo . . . If [the international community] can’t correct that we will always see Liberians being asked to cross [to fight against the Ouattara regime].

This is a widely-held perception, including by government authorities. Following a March 2016 quadripartite military forces meeting between the armed forces of Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire, UNMIL and UNOCI, that was discussing cross-border security (more on this in Chapter 10), I was having an informal discussion with a senior Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) official, during which he made the following observation:

Africans believe very much in intermarriage. If I go across the border and ask a man to marry his daughter and he agrees because of my wealth or position, and then we have two or three children . . . Tell me, if something happens on this side, and I call upon them to help, there is no way they will not help to protect me. That culture is in our DNA. It is culture driven. They just have to protect you.²⁵

²⁴ Focus group discussion, Monrovia, 21 April 2013.

²⁵ Conversation on 19 March 2016.

The following paragraph from the UN Panel of Experts June 2012 Mid-Term Report also highlights the complexity of identity narratives in this region, even with ‘known’ mercenaries:

UNMIL informed the Panel that the three individuals accused of mercenarism – Zoulou Geui Taar, Bahi Thierry and Tabin D. Albert – were released from Gbarnga Prison on 19 April 2012 . . . The Panel notes that although the 13 December 2011 [Liberian security] Task Force meeting cited three Liberians who would be charged with mercenarism, the Liberia Correctional Service intake forms for the three lists only one individual with a Liberian nationality – Bahi Thierry – and lists the other two as Ivorians. That error appears to be related to the fact that the individuals are Krahn/Guerre, and have family ties to communities on both sides of the Liberian-Ivorian border. (Panel of Experts on Liberia 2012b: 17)

In the same report, they further note that during the imprisonment of 38 Ivorians who had crossed into Liberia at the village of Tasla, near Youbor, River Gee County, on 24 May 2011, the Liberian chief of Tasla village was also imprisoned alongside the Ivorians, indicating some level of complicity with traditional authorities.

The point is, the fact of economic motives notwithstanding, combatants and border communities alike are able to marshal potent motivations based on kinship, fuelled by perceptions of prejudicial treatment against their collective, even if this includes people across the border (and even if, as discussed in the previous chapter, individual combatants do not strongly adhere to this feature). In this context, conventional militarised solutions are hardly likely to prevail, especially when identity-based motivations continue to be fuelled.

Grand Gedean cross-border grievances against both the Ivorian and Liberian governments prevail, and have been brought up-to-date by the increasing encroachment, since 2015, of Burkina Faso nationals (‘Ouattara’s people’)²⁶ hired as labourers by Ivorian (and, it must be noted, Liberian) commercial farmers; the Liberian Government’s seeming unwillingness to take action to arrest the situation is taken as further evidence of its lack of interest in the welfare of Grand Gedeh citizens, especially given the unpleasant connotations resulting from the participation of Burkinabé nationals in Charles Taylor’s original invasion of Grand Gedeh shortly after

²⁶ Stemming from the popularly-held perception that Ouattara is at least half Burkinabé.

his arrival from Côte d'Ivoire. An UNMIL staff member working on cross-border stabilisation in the region related a conversation he had with a border town chief in the affected area, who opined that the similarly hands-off approach taken by the Ivoirian government on this issue had a direct correlation to the anti-Krahn sentiment associated with the support of NPFL by Houphouët-Boigny's government, in which Ouattara was a senior figure, and exacerbated by his perceived animosity towards their relatives, the Ivoirian Guéré, and by extension to them on the Liberian side, especially given their opposition to his presidency and continued allegiance to former President Gbagbo.²⁷

Bach (2008: 172) asserts that '[m]icro-regionalism often involves a powerful cognitive component whereby boundaries defined through geo-ethnic or religious bonds prevail over lines of territorial partition'. These bonds have a powerful capacity to paint people as 'other' (or 'us versus them'). I sat in on a Grand Gedeh County Security Council (CSC) meeting on 19 January 2016 during which a traditional hunter/community watch forum member gave 'evidence' of a run-in with Burkinabé farmers. He 'performed' his testimony in the form of a dialogue between him and the farmers, which took place entirely in French, interspersed with (his) narration in Liberian English, including translation for those CSC members who could not speak French (a fact that he appeared mildly surprised by). At one point a CSC member asked how he knew that the farmers were Burkinabé as opposed to Ivoirian, and he replied very matter-of-factly that it was not the French of the 'people of the border' (which he was not only familiar with but also spoke) but that of a 'foreigner'.²⁸ These sentiments are mirrored by Ivoirians from communities in western Côte d'Ivoire, where the upsurge of Burkinabé farmers into western Côte d'Ivoire resulted in fatal clashes in 2015.

²⁷ Based on a conversation in April 2016.

²⁸ Incidentally, in an environment where physical appearance may not be a giveaway, different accents or language use are used as the marker for 'othering'. This was the case during the 13 March terrorist attack in Grand Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire, where it was noted that the attackers had 'Tuareg' accents, while evidence of the cross-border nature of attacks on Côte d'Ivoire following the post-electoral crisis often came down to the fact that the attackers were communicating with one another in Liberian English (this is countered by the observation that in the same way Liberians at the border – like the hunter – can speak localised French, so can some Ivoirians in these regions speak Liberian English)

These narratives are reinforced by Ivoirian refugees. Indeed, the hostility of refugees towards the Ouattara government, expressed during informal interviews and focus group discussions in Grand Gedeh in February 2014 when there were about 52,000 remaining in Liberia, from a height of about 220,000 following the post-electoral crisis (Momodu 2014), appeared unabated during a focus group discussion I attended at the Little Wlebo camp in Maryland in February 2016, when fewer than 30,000 remained. Chapters 9 and 10 provide more background on the alleged connections between Ivoirian refugees and cross-border militias, but this will be discussed in the next section mainly within the context of the co-creation of kinship narratives, reinforced by the idea that Liberians border residents are hosting their ethnic kin, sheltering them from the persecution they are sure to face if they return to Ouattara's Côte d'Ivoire.

7.2. 'Dangerous Sanctuaries'²⁹: refugee camps as sites of fomentation and recruitment

If borders and borderlands may be considered insecure spaces, refugee camps situated at borders are even more so. Lischer (2006) highlights that violence often accompanies refugee crises, arguing that some refugee crises can instigate the spread of civil war. She suggests that three attributes influence whether a refugee crisis will cause the spread of war: the origin of the refugee crisis; the policy of the receiving state; and the influence of external and non-state actors. She also characterises refugees by the cause of their flight, noting that where refugees are 'situational', that is those who flee to escape intolerable conditions and general destruction rather than specific persecution, they are often willing to return home as soon as stability is re-established (Lischer 2006: 10). In contrast, when a refugee crisis results from direct persecution or oppression, possibly on the basis of ethnic, religious, linguistic or political identity, this 'group persecution can facilitate political or military organization among the refugees and cross-border violence' (ibid.: 10) and these refugees 'generally refuse to return home unless they are assured protection from their persecutors' (ibid.). As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, it was presumed that militias were numbered

²⁹ This is quoted from the title of Lischer (2006).

among the Ivoirian refugee population in Liberia, some of whom were implicated in cross-border attacks.

Lischer notes a third category, a group that is essentially a 'state-in-exile', including political and military leaders, who 'organize the refugee crisis as a strategy . . . [and] refuse to return home unless they do so in victory'. She concludes that this group, along with persecuted refugees, has the highest propensity for political violence because it includes 'a highly organized political and military leadership' (ibid.: 24). Subsequent to the Ivoirian post-electoral crisis, the UN Panel of Experts traced much of the source of cross-border attacks as originating from Ghana, and highlighted the need to interrupt the funding flows between these state-in-exile refugees and those refugees in Liberia, noting that:

Long-standing alliances between Liberian mercenary and Ivorian militia commanders who previously fought together in Moyen-Cavally, western Côte d'Ivoire, as well as ethnic, familial and political connections between those individuals and former elites of the Gbagbo regime living in Ghana, constitute strong networks for the transmission of funds through couriers and bank transfers . . . from whom they receive funds, communications equipment such as satellite telephones, and instructions. The Panel observed . . . Individual combatant commanders in Liberia rely on their own personal connections to these elites in Ghana. (Panel of Experts on Liberia 2012a: 18)

While financing is critical, it is also important to understand the concerns shared by the 'state-in-exile' and persecuted groups. During my participant-observation of refugee communities between 2012 and 2016, an enduring narrative among refugees was not only their persecution, even as refugees in relative safety in Liberia, but also that of their exiled leadership in Ghana. At these different points in time, and even in the middle of an accelerated refugee return programme in 2016, these perceptions of victimisation were kept alive with frequent news from home (facilitated by the refugee camps' proximity to the borders) of the deployment of FRCI in western Côte d'Ivoire where most of the refugees were from, which was now the official military but amalgamated from the conquering rebel armies that had supported Ouattara's presidency bid, and as such considered an 'army of occupation'. Their presence was considered to have facilitated the arrival and take-over of the refugees' vacated land by northern foreigners and citizens of Burkina Faso, setting the inevitable scene for land conflicts down the line. Added to this were perceptions that DDR was poorly

implemented in western Côte d'Ivoire, Gbagbo's stronghold (and of course not extended at all to those Ivoirian militias residing in Liberia or indeed Ghana), and the decision to keep the Liberian–Ivoirian borders closed during the 2015 presidential elections, ostensibly because of the threat of the cross-border spread of Ebola, but which also denied the vote to thousands of anti-Ouattara voters, who could not return in time to register, let alone vote. Other key concerns remained the Ouattara Government's lack of commitment to genuine reconciliation – as one young refugee female told me, 'without reconciliation there can be no peace'. Another opined, 'When you are president it should be for everyone but two camps still exist. Two sides fought but only one side was brought to justice.' This echoed a commonly held view among refugees of a 'selective' or 'victor's' justice, similar to that of ex-combatants and focus group discussants as discussed in the previous chapter. They pointed to the hundreds of pro-Gbagbo political prisoners languishing in prison, while pro-Ouattara militias who had committed similar atrocities were not punished. The Government's decision to allow Gbagbo and his principal co-conspirator, former leader of the Young Patriots and Minister of Sport and Youth under Gbagbo, Charles Blé Goudé, to be charged and tried by the International Criminal Court was another bone of contention.

Lischer also notes that the ability of the latter two groups to spread conflict depends on the capability of the receiving state to secure its borders and demilitarise refugees, and its will or desire to prevent conflict; thus its response to refugee militarisation is critical to whether the conflict spreads. While the Liberian government cannot be accused of complicity as a receiving state, the Ivoirian government has expressed the opinion that the Liberian government has not done enough to prevent cross-border attacks. Further, if we consider the micro-region, it is apparent that cultural and ethnic alliances have engendered a significant level of complicity. As an UNMIL staff member observed to me in March 2012, 'they were being hosted by their Liberian counterparts, who were returning the favour and hospitality of previous years when they were

refugees in Côte d'Ivoire.³⁰ How to address this aspect is also not widely considered, as will be discussed more fully in Chapter 9.

Non-state actors, including humanitarian agencies, can also inadvertently capacitate refugees to engage in violence, for instance through the indiscriminate provision of humanitarian assistance (Grant 2008). These latter features appeared to be apparent in this micro-region. As mentioned previously, in the aftermath of the Ivoirian 2010–2011 post-election crisis, over 220,000 people, many of them Gbagbo supporters, fled to neighbouring countries, the majority to Grand Gedeh County where three refugee camps were established to accommodate them (with a further two in Nimba County and one in Maryland). Many also settled in communities before being encouraged to move to camps in Liberia's three other counties bordering Côte d'Ivoire – Nimba, River Gee and Maryland Counties. It became an explicit goal of the Liberian Government and humanitarian actors to encourage refugees to stay in camps rather than communities (encouraged by providing certain types of assistance only to refugees residing in camps).³¹ This was also widely perceived as a strategy for containing the activities of Ivoirian combatants and militias among the refugees, aided by inadequate screening measures by the Liberian authorities and UNHCR, who in the face of the maximum influx, granted Ivoirian asylum seekers *prima facie* refugee status without them undergoing individual status determination.

This reality of this perception was borne out in the detention and arrest of 86 suspected Ivoirian armed elements on 1 April 2011, after they entered Maryland County (Panel of Experts on Liberia 2012b). Nearly 100 more suspected Ivoirian armed elements were apprehended in Liberia in 2011, including 38 Ivoirians who crossed into River Gee and were ultimately extradited to Côte d'Ivoire, and many others eventually being granted refugee status. They were part of 'of a larger force of approximately 85 armed Ivorian combatants and Liberian mercenaries who had fled Abidjan on 3 May 2011, and entered Liberia with their weapons and ammunition following clashes with the *Forces républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire*, the armed forces of the Ouattara

³⁰ Interview with UNMIL staff member, March 2012.

³¹ Interview with LRRRC official, February 2012.

Government in Côte d'Ivoire, and after committing extrajudicial killings of Ivorian civilians' (Panel of Experts on Liberia 2012b: 16).

Several cross-border attacks from Liberia into Côte d'Ivoire were also carried out during this period, including an ambush on UNOCI peacekeepers on 9 June 2012 in Tai, close to the Liberian border, which resulted in the death of seven Nigerian peacekeepers. UNHCR asserted throughout that they had preserved the civilian character of the camp, including through screening, and their security in collaboration with Liberia National Police (LNP) stationed in or near the camps ensured that the camps were weapons-free. UN Panel of Experts reports, however, uncovered evidence that 'Ivoirians . . . had been recruited primarily in refugee camps within Liberia' (Panel of Experts on Liberia 2012a: 16). They also note the heavy involvement of Liberians both as commanders and foot soldiers (for instance comprising half the force that attacked village of Sakré, close to Tai, in Moyen-Cavally, Côte d'Ivoire, in April 2012) who together with Ivoirian refugee militias were engaged 'in and around Ziah refugee camp, Konobo district, and Zwedru, Grand Gedeh county'. I observed for myself this connection between Liberian ex-combatants and (presumed) Ivoirian ex-militias in refugee camps. On a visit to a refugee camp with an UNMIL colleague in 2013, he recognised and was recognised by a Liberian ex-combatant at a local watering hole, where we sat with him and his Ivoirian 'comrades'. My colleague had met the Liberian ex-combatant at the so-called Peace Camp in Guiglo, Côte d'Ivoire, a decommissioned Liberian refugee camp,³² during a trip some years previously to encourage Liberian ex-combatants to return home. (Most had declined, citing lack of opportunities at home and the hope that they might still gain something from the relatively more attractive DDR programme in Côte d'Ivoire.)

Following the encampment policy, rumours persisted that cross-border attacks were being planned by militias with refugee status residing in camps and their Liberian supporters, such that UNHCR periodically received written requests from the Presidents of Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia to relocate the refugee camps further inland,

³² According to the Panel of Experts on Liberia, in addition to being home to a substantial Liberian refugee community, Guiglo 'had been the nerve centre of mercenary recruitment for the Lima group by the former Gbagbo regime during the 2002–2003 Ivorian conflict' (Panel of Experts on Liberia 2011: 20).

away from the border, which is prescribed by international humanitarian best practice but was considered impractical and costly in this context, not least because the refugees were happy to be touching distance from home, more easily able to keep an eye on things and, in the case of some, among family members. Nonetheless, several further cross-border attacks occurred in April 2013, and attacks on Ivoirian government installations close to the Liberian border, including as recently as 2 December 2015 and 29 March 2016, are consistently alleged to have a cross-border dimension (conversation with UN Panel of Expert member in February 2016 and communication from UNOCI). As noted in Chapter 1, a summary of cross-border attacks is provided in Table A1.2 in Annex 1.

7.3. *Revisiting economic motivations*

The foregoing has strongly emphasised cross-border associational ties and common identity creation that can perhaps facilitate cross-border conflict. As the previous chapter showed, however, this is only a part of the story. This section thus discusses two other aspects – lack of economic opportunities, and financial motivations, relative to the regional dimension. This discussion can be seen as both a supply and demand dynamic and will be taken in turn. Rather than obviating the importance of these dynamics, however, they also demonstrate an interplay with the cross-border dynamics discussed in the first section of this chapter that need to be taken into consideration in mitigating measures.

7.3.1. Search for alternative employment

In 2010, I conducted some research on residual combatant chains of command in Liberia. Time and again I was informed by UN and NGO staff that the best place to conduct this type of research was in the gold and diamond mining camps, often situated in the counties bordering other countries – especially Gbarpolu, Grand Cape Mount and Grand Gedeh. Additionally, these areas attracted young men, including – so the story went – cross-border ex-combatants. Indeed, five of my 25 interviewees in Grand Gedeh were artisanal miners. Because ex-combatants apparently congregate in gold mining camps, they are also highlighted as recruitment sites for cross-border conflict. The Panel of Experts for Liberia reported in 2012 that several militias (some of

who, incidentally, were also registered refugees) were arrested 'at the New York Gold mine in Grand Gedeh County, for allegedly preparing a cross-border raid into Côte d'Ivoire' (Panel of Experts on Liberia 2012a: 22).

Why gold mining camps, one may ask? Hoffman argues that not only are the labourers deployed to work in mines the same as those deployed on the battlefield in the Mano River Union, they also demonstrate 'post Fordism or flexible specialization', meaning 'the organizational logic at work in the region was increasingly one of making young men available for "just in time" production based on whatever opportunities presented themselves: mining, timber cutting, tapping rubber, or war fighting' (Hoffman 2011b: 42). From my own research I would venture that because, like cross-border combat, border mining communities provide an opportunity to access relatively quick cash, in an environment where the rules that apply are those governed by camp chairmen (like commanders) but where traditional or even national authority does not penetrate, young men through their labour can make or decide their fortunes. Further, diamond and gold mining communities 'absorb the [absent] state's functions as a provider of social services, including education, employment and support for miners and their families when they are sick' (UNMIL/JMAC/Liberia Desk 2010). UNMIL research found evidence of smaller-scale chains of command present in some of these arrangements, where 'certain groups continue to wield power and influence due to their war-time reputations combined with the latent threat of violence' (ibid.). This is illustrated by a story related to me by a Landmine Action (now Action on Armed Violence) staff member, wherein, in the mining community Wesua in Gbarpolu County, ex-combatants who had initially expressed an interest in leaving the mining to participate in a skills training project later dropped out after being discouraged from doing so by the mining entrepreneurs they worked for, who were mostly former wartime commanders.

I interrogated this perspective with research in Henry Town, Bopulu District, Gbarpolu County in 2010. The county borders Sierra Leone but has the distinction of having no official border crossing point with that country, although it is known to have at least seven unofficial ones (Office of the Senior Inspector 2015a, 2015b). During interviews with UNMIL and NGO personnel, it was clear that it was also considered something of

a beacon for ex-combatants, including Sierra Leoneans who had remained in Liberia. During my arrival and introduction the Camp Chairman, upon hearing that I was Sierra Leonean, promptly informed me that ‘half’ of the more than 18,000 camp residents (Weedee 2012) were my countrymen. I soon found that while indeed many of these were ex-combatants, they had not necessarily fought outside Sierra Leone but had made their way to Liberia and Henry Town after the war, making their way via ‘bush roads’. They had heard about Henry Town by word of mouth from their compatriots who had since returned, and followed in their footsteps, driven, as one of my interviewees told me, by the relatively less stringent regulatory environment that prevailed in Liberia. In my interactions I identified three types of Sierra Leonean miners. There were the ‘lifers’ who indeed had fought in Liberia, had more or less cut ties with family and life in Sierra Leone and seemed to live only for the day. Then there were those who planned on (and succeeded in) only being there for a short while, driven by the intention to return with enough money to build a property, acquire a business or marry a wife. Finally, there were those who appeared to be in the grips of a ‘wild west’ type existence, where the gold they dug for every day bought them everything from satellite TV and mobile phones to Nike trainers, booze, drugs, or even a warm body for the night, these items conveniently priced in grams of gold. These people expressed that their intention was only to be there for a short period but in reality had come years previously and still remained, with little to show for it.

I found this experience to be extremely instructive for how I framed my subsequent understanding of regional combatant motivation. Speaking to some of them, there seemed no distinction as to whether they were crossing borders to fight or to dig for gold: both occupations required a skill they possessed in abundance – strength – and potentially provided a pathway to a better life.

This is the argument that Hoffman elegantly elaborates on in various articles and his book, *War Machines* (2011a, 2011b, 2007). He observes that ‘the language of labor, employment, gain, compensation, reward, security – the language, in other words, of postmodern work – was very much the language of militia fighters throughout West Africa’s Mano River War’ (Hoffman 2011b: 34). He urges readers to think of violence as

a mode of production and of the perpetrators of that violence as a 'workforce' (ibid.: 36).

As noted above, an in-depth discussion of warlords and political entrepreneurs, as separate from rank and file combatants, is outside the scope of this thesis, but it is worthwhile to make brief mention here in relation to a demand-side discussion of the political economy of micro-regions and the financial incentives of these groups. I consider their motivations in the context of the 'political marketplace' (de Waal 2016). Much has been written about the 'new geography of conflict . . . in which resource flows rather than political or ideological divisions constitute the major fault lines' (Grant 2008: 114), often using the West African conflicts as case studies. Indeed, in the sub-region 'the illicit trade networks in blood diamonds and other commodities to grey arms sales markets, nascent regional trade corridors, regional conflicts, cross-border trading and migration' are noted, often facilitated by the informalisation of political power (Söderbaum and Taylor 2008b: 22).

Charles Taylor especially has been held up as the poster child for warlordism, and his support for conflicts in neighbouring countries can be explained at least in part by his desire to exert control over lucrative diamond and timber resources, including in Sierra Leone. As Grant (2008: 114) notes, 'Taylor's remarkable ability to conclude commercial deals with a wide range of business interests on exporting timber, rubber, diamonds and iron ore provided the means to pay his military commanders and officials, promote patrimonial networks among chiefs and other supporters and purchase weapons'.

Speaking of the so-called Parrot's Beak, and extending the analysis to include Côte d'Ivoire, Grant notes that it was 'a hotly contested micro-region as belligerents fight for control of diamonds, gold, timber, rubber, agricultural products and humanitarian aid – not to mention of the requisite cross-border routes and conduits for weapons, goods and people' (ibid.: 120). This has extended into peacetime, where 'people, diamonds, weapons, illegal narcotics, various extractive commodities, foodstuffs and consumer goods are known to pass relatively freely across the borders' (ibid.: 118), facilitated by the 'the dual forces of globalisation on the one hand and already-weak state capacity on the other' (ibid.: 113). I have already noted above that Sierra

Leoneans and others prefer artisanal mining in Liberia due to the comparatively weak regulatory regime. It is not difficult to imagine that these could develop into or be co-opted by a more sophisticated machinery, benefitting from a command and control system similar to that which existed during the war, bringing with it the attendant violence that accompanies illicit cross-border activities in other parts of the world.

Even this situation, however, should not be considered as a simple economic transaction. de Waal, expanding on the political marketplace, conceptualises it as 'a system of governance run on the basis of personal transactions in which political services and allegiances are exchanged for material reward in a competitive manner' (2016: 1). He notes however that financial motives are still insufficient, and that 'Typically, we see moral populism and a political marketplace flourishing hand-in-hand. The two feed off one another: political entrepreneurs call on moral populist scripts to mobilize support and exclude others, while moral populists utilize political business strategies to survive and prosper' (ibid.: 3).

7.4. Conclusion

This chapter has sought to interrogate more closely, through the lens of the micro-region, the cultural identity narratives discussed in the previous section and the literature, which are trumped by regional combatants and peacebuilders alike as an important motivating factor for participation in cross-border conflict. In keeping with the conceptualisation of the new regionalisms approach, it emphasises the importance of *evolving* historical, political, economic and social dynamics that cannot be ignored when analysing and responding to regional conflict. It noted that border regions are areas in which conflicts often arise and are perpetuated: they are often the most remote from nations' capitals, and accordingly are often the most neglected, and easily become areas where grievances foment. This is especially the case for the Mano River Union countries, where the movement of cross-border fighters is set against a backdrop of poorly patrolled borders, ethnic loyalties that straddle multiple dividing lines, and contested border areas.

The chapter further highlighted the persistence of symbolic and social identity around which people are able to rally. People will point to the ethnic overtones of factions in

conflict, relating to cross-border kinship, historical ties, and socio-political grievances. It also shows, however, that just as international boundaries between neighbouring countries are both real and imagined, so the *lack* of boundaries between these regions is equally as real, and imagined. By this I mean that at the same time as cultural affinities are marshalled to justify cross-border conflict, this cannot be divorced from the individual desires for improving one's situation, even if the reason is communal (to obtain a wife, or to build a house for one's family). This elaborates on the previous chapter's conclusion that material/financial incentives are but one aspect of a complex set of combatant motivations. While cross-border communities commonly assert that young men are recruited because of familial ties, it is also clear that this ethnic kinship identity is wielded opportunistically and to personal advantage – for instance, being able to slip in and out of countries undetected because it is difficult for outsiders to identify individuals from across the border as strangers, which facilitates their participation in neighbouring conflicts and ensures their safety or protection among kinship groups in neighbouring communities. Thus, those external peacebuilders who would settle on such characteristics as kinship ties to propose mitigating measures must be savvy to the reality that border communities and regional combatants strategically deploy relational ties as bargaining chips or options.

Indeed, the narratives of society, culture, and what constitutes an in-group has changed and been exacerbated by colonial and post-colonial national configurations and conflict. It is therefore too simplistic to subscribe to traditional idealised versions of culture, society and familial ties and relations and necessary to consider not only the impetus of personal ambition and gain, but that ambition in the context of what it means for a person to be a meaningful member of society.

Conversely, while economic motives are salient, it is important to realise that these are similarly mediated through socio-cultural perspectives, facilitated by the nexus of cross-border kinship and economic opportunities available in borderland micro-regions. As such, appropriate responses require peacebuilding discourse and practice that can understand and address the seeming dichotomies and differing motivation narratives. The extent to which this has happened, and the implications are the subject of the next three chapters, which considers in turn the organisational processes of

peace operations, which frame peacebuilders' ways of working, recalling the institutional ethnography approach (Chapter 8), and the resulting practices by international peacebuilders (Chapter 9) and their national counterparts (Chapter 10).

8. Peace operations' mandates and their limitations

The next few chapters provide an analysis of peacebuilders' capacity to effectively address regional conflict, especially given the complexities associated with combatant motivations highlighted in the two previous chapters. The two chapters that follow this one will place peacebuilding practice in dialogue with these motivations, evaluating the extent to which resulting cross-border stabilisation efforts in the Mano River Union (MRU) sub-region effectively address regional combatants' motivations. This chapter serves as something of a bridge as – in keeping with the conceptual framework, which advocates a consideration across the spectrum of peacebuilding practice – it considers the broader context within which peacebuilding practices are shaped.

This chapter highlights two issues. Firstly, it considers Autesserre's assertion that the practices, habits and narratives intrinsic to international peacebuilders constrain their effectiveness (Autesserre 2014). She ascribes this to on-the-ground peacebuilders themselves who, particularly in their habits 'do not prioritize intimate understanding of local histories, cultures, or language' and 'reproduce counterproductive modes of operation instead of challenging them' (Autesserre 2014: 33). While I agree to some extent, her focus on on-the-ground peacebuilders does not allow for sufficient analysis of the ways in which extra-local factors, as highlighted in relation to institutional ethnography in Chapter 5, contribute to this reproduction of counterproductive modes, even as she recognises that external factors significantly influence on-the-ground activities. This chapter seeks to redress this to some extent. Accordingly, Section 8.1 takes as its starting point the context within which Security Council resolutions are crafted, resolutions being the most important documents for peace operations because they provide their mandates, that is the authority for their operations and broad outlines of their required (mandated) peacekeeping and peacebuilding tasks. This section shows how resolutions are, however, developed within a context of competing priorities, financial constraints and crisis, potentially curtailing peacekeeping and peacebuilding practice at the source.

Section 8.2 expands on the second issue, which relates to how mandates are translated into practice on the ground, and as such, the means by which extra- and

trans-local factors influence on-the-ground peacebuilders' practices, and the ways in which peacebuilders in turn react, respond and influence these processes. It particularly explores the role of 'text' in this regard. Recalling institutional ethnography's reading of texts discussed in Chapter 5, institutions such as the UN could be considered as 'textually-mediated forms of organisation' (Smith 2002: 39). In such institutions, again as noted in Chapter 5, external or extra-local discourse is important because it acts as a mutual point of reference in the local context, even though the authors of external discourse/text mostly transcend the local historical context. The discussion thus elaborates on the distinctive ways in which texts structure consciousness, social relationships and 'ruling relations' (Walby 2007: 1008) within the UN. The aim is to unravel the interconnectedness of activities in different sites, as well as to learn about the individual's location in the relations of ruling or to learn what the individual does with texts (Walby 2007). As such, the section also explores the ways in which texts are reinterpreted, manipulated, traduced and evaded³³ by peacebuilders on the ground and the implications for peacekeeping and peacebuilding practice.

As noted above, this chapter could be considered broad strokes that relate to peacekeeping and peacebuilding practice more generally, but given that the thesis is concerned with regional peace and security, Section 8.3 introduces the language on regional and inter-mission cooperation in the Mano River sub-region, while an arguably innovative response to the reality of cross-border conflict and multiple peace operations in a single region, is similarly constrained. This provides the basis for critical analysis of its implementation in Chapters 9 and 10, which contextualise the discussion and consider in detail how the limitations generate an imbalanced interaction with the narratives and discourses of regional combatants highlighted in previous chapters, thus limiting the value of programmes and interventions on the ground. Section 8.4 provides some concluding remarks on the role and impact of texts in such contexts.

It should be noted that this chapter is not meant to be read as an extensive critique or evaluation of UN peace operations, which has been examined exhaustively elsewhere

³³ I wish to acknowledge that this phrasing is adapted text from the feedback of one of my supervisors, Robin Luckham.

(see for instance Koops et al. 2015; Fortna 2008; Doyle and Sambanis 2006). Nor does it provide a comprehensive overview of the inner workings of the UN. It does, however, elaborate on the constraints it faces in relation to the literature discussed in Chapter 4, which posits international peacebuilding as cut-and-paste, discourse-driven, top-down and formulaic. It draws extensively on textual analysis and my participant-observation of the efforts by the UN to support Liberia and her neighbours to consolidate regional peace and security, and is framed within the institutional ethnography approach discussed in Chapter 5.

8.1. *Making mandates for peace operations*

Chapter 4 has already highlighted several shortcomings associated with UN peace operations. Thus, it is appropriate only to recount a few relevant ones here, in relation to constraints on determining peace operations' mandates. Four aspects may be highlighted: the political nature of decision-making within the UN; financial considerations; the crisis nature of conflicts, which colour how peacekeeping decisions are made; and the bureaucratic nature of the UN, resulting in adherence to stock texts. Each of these issues influences the mandates that are eventually passed to on-the-ground peacebuilders.

With regard to the political nature of decision-making, Weiss and Thakur (2010) note that the Security Council and General Assembly³⁴ are intergovernmental forums in which people make decisions as delegates of national governments with their own national foreign policies and priorities. As such, '[t]he politics of the Council also contort the mandates themselves, as compromise is always required. The danger for the Council is the muddying of the political objective; as the "obfuscation of the political objective leads to ambiguity in the mandate"' (Nadin 2014). Accordingly, ensuing resolutions are often the result of significant negotiations, and are often watered down to achieve consensus, especially in the Security Council, where all five permanent members (the P5) must agree before a resolution is passed (or at least not

³⁴ These are two of the six principal organs of the UN, the other four being the Secretariat, Economic and Social Council, Trusteeship Council, and the International Court of Justice.

sue their veto). For relatively small and un-strategic countries, such as those in the Mano River sub-region,³⁵ but which each have the benefit of a champion among the P5,³⁶ possible areas of contention may not be immediately obvious. Indeed, as mentioned in previous chapters, the three countries have been both learning ground and poster-child for robust multidimensional peacekeeping and peacebuilding, which kept them funded year after year, but this does not preclude disunity of purpose.

The crisis nature of decision-making around peace operations also adversely affects mandates. Nadin notes further:

The Security Council, however, usually under pressure of events on the ground, very rarely has a chance to formulate a strategy before establishing a peace operation. Instead, most missions are forged out of the ‘political and organisational pressures’ of the day and engendered with ‘a culture of ad-hoc decision-making in a climate of constant crisis’. (Nadin 2014)

While this critique may be relevant in the immediate aftermath of a crisis, it does not, however, explain why apparently similarly constrained resolutions are passed year after year in long-established missions, including UNMIL and UNOCI.

Another consideration, especially with longer-term missions, is the cost of financing operations. While all member states share the burden for funding peace operations, the P5 are required to pay a larger share of assessed funding contributions for peace operations³⁷ because of their special responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. Indeed, they are among the top 10 providers of assessed contributions, with the United States contributing three times more than the second highest contributor (28.57 percent compared to China’s 10.29 percent in 2016 (United Nations Peacekeeping n.d.)).³⁸ It is worth noting here that for the 2016–2017 budget year, the

³⁵ With the possible exception of Côte d’Ivoire, which is economically and strategically important for France.

³⁶ Mostly as a result of colonial history – namely the UK for Sierra Leone, the USA for Liberia, and France for Côte d’Ivoire.

³⁷ The General Assembly apportions peacekeeping expenses based on a special scale of assessments under a complex formula that Member States themselves have established, taking into account, among other things, the relative economic wealth of Member States.

³⁸ The top 10 providers in 2016 were: United States (28.57%); China (10.29%); Japan (9.68%); Germany (6.39%); France (6.31%); United Kingdom (5.80%); Russian Federation (4.01%); Italy (3.75%); Canada (2.92%); and Spain (2.44%) (United Nations Peacekeeping, n.d.).

UN peacekeeping budget was US\$7.87 billion, covering 16 missions, and there has been consistent pressure, not least among the P5, to reduce peacekeeping costs, especially those arising from older missions such as UNMIL and UNOCI. For instance, the Secretariat developed a budget of US\$205 million for Liberia for the financial year 2016–2017, already representing a decrease of 40.5 percent in gross terms from the previous 2015/16 appropriation. This was slashed, however, by a further 9 percent by the Fifth Committee (see below) in its resolution approving financing of UNMIL for this period.

It should be noted that while the Security Council is chiefly responsible for establishing and maintaining peace operations, the General Assembly also plays a significant role. It has supervisory responsibilities over the UN Secretariat, within which the Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) sits, and approves its budget, staffing regulations and structure (Peterson 2007: 99). Additionally, member states contribute troops and other personnel to peace operations.³⁹ The Administrative and Budgetary Committee of the General Assembly, also known as the Fifth Committee,⁴⁰ comprising all member states, is further responsible for considering and preparing draft resolutions on programme budgets for adoption by the Assembly, including for peace operations (United Nations Secretariat 2004). The Fifth Committee's work is largely done on the basis of informal consultations and, once consensus is reached, is submitted to the General Assembly (United Nations Secretariat 2004). The Fifth Committee holds three sessions: during the main part of the General Assembly session (September to

³⁹ In addition to those countries that contribute to decision-making on financing, troop contributing countries (TCCS) also play an important role. As of 31 August 2016, there were 100,019 uniformed personnel (military and police) from 123 countries, serving in the 16 peacekeeping missions around the world (United Nations 2016). The bulk of peacekeeping troops, including for West Africa are drawn from member states, mostly developing countries rather than the Security Council. The top three troop (police and military) contributing countries as of 31 August 2016 were Ethiopia (8,326); India (7,471); and Pakistan (7,140). Source: http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2016/aug16_2.pdf. Their influence is somewhat limited, however, by insufficient consultation by the Security Council about where and under what circumstances peacekeeping missions are decided.

⁴⁰ There are six committees of the General Assembly in total, the remaining being: Disarmament and International Security Committee (First Committee); Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee); Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (Third Committee); Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee); and Legal Committee (Sixth Committee).

December); a resumed session in March; and a second resumed session in May, specifically to deal with administrative and budgetary aspects of UN Peacekeeping.

Even within the UN, the way the Fifth Committee operates has been critiqued. In his 2016 statement on behalf of the Africa Group at the close of the Fifth Committee session on peacekeeping, the representative from Tanzania noted:

As we stated in the past, the African Group would like to stress that, the consideration of the peacekeeping budgets should not be taken as a simple costs reduction exercise but rather a responsible mandate implementation-resource allocation and policy guidance driven exercise. (Kisoka 2016)

Further, although the emphasis is on informal consultations and consensus building, some have critiqued the nature of consultations, and the back door and secretive nature of the Fifth Committee. In this relation, the Tanzania Representative also noted:

In conclusion, the African Group reiterates its longstanding position that the work of this Committee should be conducted in an open, transparent and all-inclusive manner. The Group therefore wishes to reassure you of its readiness to engage with other delegations in a constructive [manner] and of course with application of innovative ideas, with a view to achieving a positive outcome on all agenda items before end the month. We would like to encourage other delegations to do their part including avoiding some unnecessary tactics which may negatively impact the work of the Committee and the population in the ground. (Kisoka 2016: 3)

He was not alone in his critique of the nature of consultations. The European Union representative made the following observation in his closing statement at the same session: 'Again the Committee has been unable to conclude this peacekeeping session within the time allocated. There is a strong shared feeling that four weeks is not enough to deal with the complex matters at hand and the massive amount of work that the approval of each individual peacekeeping budgets entail' (Vrailas 2016: 3).

Other problems lie not with the decision-making process but with the procedures themselves. For instance, unlike other UN programme budgets, which cover a calendar period of two years, the budget period for peacekeeping operations is one year, running from 1 July to 30 June, which limits a medium-term perspective. Overlaying this, as peace operations are established according to need, they are often out of sync with the budget period. Regardless of the date of the resolution, typically field missions receive an instruction from the Controller's Office in August of every year to

start planning the budget the following June; Liberia's first mandate was September 2003 and with some exceptions has been renewed annually,⁴¹ meaning budgetary planning has consistently been out of sync with when the mandate is typically received, in September.

To elaborate: for UNMIL in a typical year, say 2012/13, when I started the substantive part of my fieldwork, the code cable from New York instructing the mission to begin planning for the 2013/14 budget document arrived in August 2012. This came as the Mission was completing its reporting for the 2011/12 budget year. Hot on its heels, the Mission received the S/Res 2066 with the mandate in September 2012 which, among others, endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendations⁴² for reducing UNMIL's military and police strength (United Nations Security Council, 2012b). It was also understood in that resolution, but not elaborated, that civilian personnel and tasks would also be cut. UNMIL, broadly used this and the other directives contained in the resolution to plan its Results-Based Budgeting (RBB)⁴³ activities and related staffing and costing requirements, not for that year, but the *following one*, i.e. the financial period from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014. In the meantime, some back-peddalling was required to adjust for the cuts requested in the new mandate, requiring the curtailment some activities, especially given that the 2012/13 budget, including staffing levels and priority areas, had been prepared against the September 2011 resolution.

The next section elaborates on some of the implications of these processes, especially as they relate to the (arguably problematic) production and reproduction of texts like the resolutions and RBB, which underlie peacebuilding practice.

⁴¹ When decisions are imminent (such as decisions to change the nature of the mission), or a crisis (such as Ebola), mission mandates may be revised within shorter timeframes.

⁴² Contained in his reports S/2012/230 and S/2012/641.

⁴³ The Results Based Budgeting (RBB) process determines peacekeeping's operations budgets for a given financial year and results in the main document that highlights a peacekeeping mission's key priorities, expected accomplishments, indicators of achievement and outputs. It essentially turns a three- to six-page Security Council resolution containing the mission's mandate into a nearly 100-page document, detailing the mission's plan for interpreting and delivering on the mandate, including planned results and required financial resources military and police personnel, international and national staff, and United Nations Volunteers.

8.2. *Interpreting and implementing peacekeeping mandates*

Three things happened shortly after I arrived in Liberia to work with UNMIL (which I will also refer to as ‘the Mission’) in August 2012. First, I was asked to submit my unit’s inputs to the performance report for the previous budget year (which ran from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012), which for the most part entailed counting and verifying the evidence for a certain number of meetings and a variety of other activities (i.e. ‘outputs’) and writing some accompanying narrative. These theoretically contributed to particular ‘expected accomplishments’ and ‘indicators of achievement’ that my unit had committed to. This was my first encounter with the ubiquitous RBB process (discussed above) and at the time all I could think was ‘surely there must be a better way of accounting for time spent and impact of engagement than counting the number of daily situation reports and notes-to-files (i.e. short notes) on a given activity’. The second thing that happened was that UNMIL received S/Res 2066, passed on 17 September 2012, which renewed UNMIL’s mandate for another year, under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. Thirdly, I was requested to contribute my unit’s inputs for the 2013–2014 RBB cycle, following receipt of the budget instruction as noted in the previous section.

At the time I did not draw any correlation between the RBB process and the Security Council resolution. I did not even read the resolution, upon which, I later came to realise, my job was entirely dependent. I was, however, compelled to read the 2013 resolution (S/Res 2116) the following year, because by then I was working expressly on regional and inter-mission cooperation (R/IMC) issues, and more closely with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (OSRSG), and it was my job to know exactly what our mandate for IMC was. It also took me a while to understand that the question ‘what is our mandate for IMC?’ actually meant, ‘what does the latest Security Council resolution say about inter-mission cooperation and how are we, as a Mission, going to interpret it?’ Subsequently, I became quite concerned with the detail of mandate language for reasons that will be discussed below. But even then I did not consider this seeming imposition of the mandate from ‘on high’ as particularly problematic. After all, while it was true that the document had

come from above, it also seemed that UNMIL had countless avenues and opportunities to influence perspectives, given that the Mission was the main source of information for decision-makers in New York, through daily and weekly reporting, regular reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the situation in Liberia (substantively written by the Mission), performance reviews, code cables, and reporting on benchmarks, as well as regular interactions with relevant desk officers in New York. Not least, the Mission had primary responsibility for the aforementioned RBB process. Surely this provided the Mission an ideal opportunity to put its more nuanced stamp on the mandate?

I became increasingly aware, however, of the tension between the perception among colleagues that the evident strictures of the mandate meant that we in the field (or on the ground) had seemingly little control over critical decision-making processes, and increasing awareness that the production of the RBB more often than not felt like an exercise in trying to interpret the mandate in a way that would enable us to get away with doing, or not doing, particular things. As such, much time was spent poring over mandate language to see if there was any room for manoeuvre (i.e. how we could disguise what we were doing that was not part of our mandate and get away with it, or how we could describe it in such a way that it could be conceivably be considered as being undertaken in fulfilment of mandate requirements). A case in point was language on cross-border DDR, which will be discussed in Section 8.3 below and elaborated further in the next chapter.

This led me to thinking about the relationship between UN field missions and Headquarters' personnel (UN Secretariat desk officers in New York, and UN Member States themselves). In relation to our New York colleagues, I wondered, surely our messaging was their messaging? How could we on one hand provide the information that informed the resolution and other directives from New York and then complain on the other about the result of the messaging? More broadly, if we, the experts and technicians on the ground, were feeding our expertise and knowledge into decision-making processes, as surely our handlers in New York were passing this information on to the powers-that-be, albeit in a more polished and informed format, why were we still struggling with the strictures of the mandates passed down to us in the

resolutions? Specifically, in the context of my PhD I wondered why this was seemingly not the case and about the implications thereof.

Examining this issue requires a closer look at the UN Secretariat, headed by the Secretary-General, and may be considered the closest thing the world has to an 'independent international civil service' (Jonah 2007: 160). Within the Secretariat, DPKO has responsibility for 'planning, preparing for, and conducting UN peacekeeping operations in accordance with mandates provided by member states, usually through Security Council Resolutions' (Weiss and Thakur 2010: 69), and it

provides political and executive direction to UN Peacekeeping operations around the world and maintains contact with the Security Council, troop and financial contributors, and parties to the conflict in the implementation of Security Council mandates. The Department works to integrate the efforts of UN, governmental and non-governmental entities in the context of peacekeeping operations. DPKO also provides guidance and support on military, police, mine action and other relevant issues to other UN political and peacebuilding missions. (United Nations, n.d.)

Within DPKO, which is headed by an Under-Secretary-General, there are four main offices. The Office of Operations (DPKO/OO), headed by an Assistant-Secretary-General, provides political, strategic policy and operational guidance and support to the missions. It is divided among four divisions – Africa I (East Africa and the Horn); Africa II (West and Central Africa, under which UNMIL and UNOCI fall); Asia and the Middle East; and Europe and Latin America. Within DPKO, the Office of the Rule of Law and Security Institutions (OROLSI) aims to strengthen the links between, and coordinates the Department's activities in the areas of, police, justice and corrections, mine action, DDR of ex-combatants and security sector reform (SSR), and includes police officers seconded by their governments. The Office of Military Affairs (OMA) works to deploy the most appropriate, efficient and effective military capability in support of United Nations objectives and also includes officers seconded by Member States. Finally, the Policy Evaluation and Training (PET) Division provides an integrated capacity to develop and disseminate policy and doctrine; develop, coordinate and deliver standardized training; evaluate mission progress towards mandate implementation; and develop policies and operational frameworks for strategic cooperation with various UN and external partners (United Nations, n.d.).

The Africa II Division, which is responsible for developing overarching integrated strategies for Liberia as well as Côte d'Ivoire, provides strategic direction on cross-cutting, mission-specific and political issues, as well as day-to-day operational support, including guidance on policy and operational issues; and coordination with other DPKO-Department of Field Support (DFS) offices, as well as other departments, agencies, funds, programmes and regional entities. It also has responsibility for devising, promoting agreement on and implementing integrated solutions to the political and operational challenges of Department-led operations⁴⁴ and conveying relevant concerns to Member States and other relevant partners, and vice versa. It leads integrated planning for new Department-led operations and coordinates transitions, as well as consolidation and exit strategies for existing operations. It further fulfils the reporting obligations of the Secretary-General to the Security Council for Department-led operations (Integrated Training Service - Policy Evaluation and Training Division 2015: 13).

Africa II DPKO/OO staff are supported in their tasks by the West Africa Integrated Operations Team (IOT), a 'cross-functional team . . . that perform[s] a range of core tasks related to the integrated operational, including political, guidance and support' to West African peacekeeping missions, incorporating other offices in the Secretariat (Integrated Training Service - Policy Evaluation and Training Division 2015: 13).

For the most part, rank and file field mission staff remain blissfully unaware of the IOT and Africa II, but for others, particularly those in Front Offices of the SRSGs and his Deputies, these entities are both the source of critical information and essential guidance, and a seemingly endless number of 'requests from New York.' Often, the requests are sent by email, but more weightily, they may arrive in the form of a code cable – a memo seemingly emanating from, or at the least signed off by, the USG of peacekeeping himself, requesting or delivering information on any number of Mission activities. Whenever the cable is a request for information, the Mission hurries to respond, agonising over each phrasing, sentence and punctuation mark, as the reply

⁴⁴ It should also be noted that alongside DPKO is the Department of Political Affairs (or DPA), which provides a range of activities including political analysis, and in some cases (for instance Somalia) backstops Special Political Missions, which are another form of peace operations.

passes from the drafter, usually a junior officer, to his or her immediate supervisor, to the head of section, to the head of pillar and ultimately to reviewers in the SRSF Front Office who, as the day-to-day interlocutors with the IOT, have the best sense of what type of response and therefore content is required.

This ritual of report writing, and it is indeed a ritual, is replicated across the length and breadth of documents processed for transmission to New York, with several effects. Chief among these is the sieving out of sometimes critical detail and nuance, in the effort to supply information the Mission interprets New York wants or needs to know. A case in point is the regular Secretary-General's report on the situation in a given country to the Security Council (the 'SG report', delivered in Liberia's case twice yearly, or as mandated by the relevant resolution). The code cable from New York regarding the report arrives with suggested topics of focus and recommended word counts for each section. This is then sent out by OSRSF or the Political Affairs Section, which in Liberia is responsible for compiling the reports, to the relevant sections for input. The sections then send the request to the relevant desk officers, who work on the given issue and could accordingly write pages and pages on critical recent developments but are asked to relegate their inputs to at most a couple of paragraphs. This then gets sent up the chain as previously discussed, to be whittled down and harmonised to make it part of the greater whole, with the juicy and arguably more important aspects invariably left on the cutting room floor.

An example from an input I submitted for the February 2016 SG report:

I welcome the continued efforts by the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia to improve their coordination on border stabilization. This includes convening the second Joint Council of Chiefs and Elders Meeting (JCCEM) in Guiglo, Côte d'Ivoire from 16–18 January 2016, which aimed to strengthen cooperation between administrative authorities and traditional leaders in the border region. The JCCEM follows the first such meeting in October 2013 and builds on the Quadripartite process reinvigorated in March 2015, after the Ebola epidemic had abated.

I also welcome the resumption of voluntary repatriation of Ivoirian refugees on 16 December 2015, following a Tripartite meeting from 9–10 December 2015. My SRSFs for UNOCI and UNMIL played an active role, including paying a joint visit to Little Wlebo Refugee Camp in Maryland on 2 December 2015 to encourage refugees to return home following peaceful Ivoirian Presidential elections in October 2015. These developments underscore the progress made in the region towards resilient peace. I would encourage the two governments to continue to create a safe and secure border

environment to facilitate ongoing voluntary repatriation of refugees and to mitigate against the alleged border violence that I reported in my previous report. In this regard, I note with concern the attack on 2 December 2015 on two FRCI camps in the town of Olodio in southwestern Côte d'Ivoire, approximately 15–20 km from the Liberian border town of Yobloken, and which resulted in the movement of 10 Ivoirian families into Liberia.

What was eventually published was the following:

I welcome the continued efforts by the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia to improve coordination on border stabilization, in particular by convening the second meeting of the joint council of chiefs and elders, in January, which built on the quadripartite process reinvigorated in March 2015 after the Ebola epidemic had abated. I also welcome the resumption of the voluntary repatriation of Ivorian refugees in December. These developments demonstrate the progress made in the region towards resilient and sustainable peace. I encourage the two Governments to continue to build a safe and secure border environment to facilitate the ongoing voluntary repatriation of refugees and to mitigate concerns with regard to border violence, as set out in my previous report. (United Nations Security Council 2016c: 17)

I highlight this particular example because while (uncharacteristically!) much of my original submission was incorporated, in my view, some of the most critical aspects were cut out. This included the point that attacks in the proximity of the Liberian border were still taking place, missing an opportunity to flag an ongoing problem, especially as another attack took place shortly after the report was published. As far as UNMIL was concerned, the attacks did not have a cross-border dimension but UNOCI cited that Ivoirian government sources believed they were being carried out by (Ivoirian) militias still residing in Liberia. Either way, initial on-the-ground analysis of the attacks pointed to ongoing resentment between border communities and the FRCI, which as noted in the previous chapter was still considered an army of occupation, but also indicated a different dimension of motivation, related to competition between FRCI and border youths over the 'fees' for illicit border crossings, given that the Liberian–Ivoirian border at the time was still closed due to Ebola restrictions. I would argue that not being able to highlight or at least signpost these issues in the Secretary-General's report, which is a major reference document for a range of peacekeeping and peacebuilding actors, kept such issues from being considered as important areas of intervention, which, as we will see in the next chapter, may have contributed to keeping economic motivations off the regional peacebuilding agenda, despite on-the-ground peacebuilders' best efforts.

A similarly skewed process is evident in the RBB process, discussed in the previous section. By the time suggested inputs are put through the wringer of the reviewing ritual, the final outputs that field officers are meant to use to guide their work are sometimes hardly recognisable from what they suggested in the first place, leaving them at a loss as to how to go about implementing activities that they are still responsible for, and querying the value of both their inputs and the resulting programme of work.⁴⁵ With slight adjustments business largely continues as usual, however, with staff continuing to carry out non-mandated activities, stretching their relevance to justify ongoing reporting against the old budget but seemingly in line with the new mandate.

The preceding discussion highlights a two-fold problem. Firstly, it demonstrates the structural constraints that guide mandate resolution configuration, and secondly it shows that even if people *on the ground* have an accurate reading of the situation (for instance ex-combatant motivations, as will be shown in the next chapter), the ways in which texts are produced and reproduced do not lend themselves to ensuring that this accurate reading is presented or prioritised.

On the other hand, assuming that the new mandate was the best negotiated outcome, given the advice from the IOT and informed deliberations by the Security Council, having all the information at their fingertips and a more strategic global perspective than the mission, whose staff after all need to continue to justify its existence to keep themselves in a job, then the field staff's stubborn adherence to business as usual could be considered a waste of valuable (and scarce) resources for peace operations. This could especially be considered the case as the same mission staff are responsible for reporting against their accomplishments, essentially evaluating themselves, thus able to hide or highlight certain activities as they deem fit.

⁴⁵ This conclusion was derived following countless discussions with colleagues about the RBB process, particularly during stocktaking exercises, when several 'RBB orphans' have been identified, the result of either such extensive language modification that they are unidentifiable to the section that proposed them in the first place, or outputs proposed by someone higher up the chain that a given unit does not feel it has the capacity, interest or belief in its relevance to implement.

I have gone into this in some detail to highlight that despite the depth of expertise both within peace operations and in the Secretariat in New York, some of the ways in which ritualised ways of working within the UN, with these examples of report-writing and RBB preparations, can and do stifle innovation and the ability to address critical issues, as will be shown in the next section and chapter.

This section concludes with an issue that seeks to reinforce the problematic of texts, that is UN's preference for templating – which constrains critical assessment and adaptation to the challenges and particularities of a situation. One possible exception to this has been the evolving approach to regional and inter-mission cooperation as it relates to the peace operations in West Africa, as will be discussed below, but even this is affected by this problematic adherence to templating.

Nadin (2014) notes, '[t]he problem with many UN peace operations is that they rely too heavily on template approaches, rather than country-specific ones.' For instance, in relation to the three MRU missions, UNAMSIL, UNMIL and UNOCI, a cursory analysis of the operative clauses⁴⁶ of the respective resolutions establishing each mission bears this out, as we find that the language is remarkably similar between them, as demonstrated in Table A5.1 in Annex 5: Examples of common mandate language across missions and over time. Apparent from an analysis of the resolutions for these three missions is that from year to year, much of the mandate language remained almost if not exactly the same, both within and across missions, save if something momentous was expected to or did happen that year, such as presidential elections or the closure of the mission. This is demonstrated even more clearly in relation to the resumption of conflict with a cross-border dimension in Table A5.2, also in Annex 5: Examples of common mandate language across missions and over time, which specifically examines the language on regional and inter-mission cooperation in successive years from 2012 to 2015 within UNMIL. This may not seem problematic, especially if relating to the same country. But in a context where mandates are given annually, if not more frequently, this raises the question as to the extent to which stock of progress is being taken, or

⁴⁶ UN resolutions generally comprise preambular paragraphs, which present the background to the action part of a resolution, and operative paragraphs, which express the opinions of Member States and contain the action that they are agreeing to take (United Nations n.d.).

indeed whether any progress is being made, or, if issues are no longer included, whether it is because they have been successfully resolved or have just fallen by the wayside due to financial or other considerations discussed in Section 8.1.

Where some dynamism is evident it serves to highlight some of the critiques raised in Chapter 4. For instance, Table A5.1 highlights the promotion of a western liberal democracy model, chief among which is 'support for democratic elections.' The comparison of the mandates also demonstrates the increasingly all-encompassing nature of peace operations. For instance, in 1999 when UNAMSIL was established, Chapter VII of the UN charter was referenced specifically in operative paragraph (OP) 14 to note that in the discharge of its mandate, 'UNAMSIL may take the necessary action to ensure the security and freedom of movement of its personnel and, within its capabilities and areas of deployment, to afford protection to civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, taking into account the responsibilities of the Government of Sierra Leone and ECOMOG' (United Nations Security Council 1999: 3). In contrast, in 2003 and 2004 for UNMIL and UNOCI respectively, the phrase 'Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations' prefaced the operative clauses in their entirety (United Nations Security Council 2003: 3; United Nations Security Council 2004: 2). This increasingly expansive notion of multidimensional peacekeeping is not all negative, however, as the changes also demonstrate a response to lessons learnt from previous experience. Thus, for instance, the Liberian and Ivoirian mandates for DDR factored in the specific and separate needs of women and children, learning from the Sierra Leone situation, and they. At least in the UNOCI resolution, also took a broader view of security sector reform from police and military reform, to include justice and rule of law.

Additionally, the language in the three missions' Security Council resolutions from start-up onwards emphasised the regional effects of conflict, and the importance of regional efforts to mitigate them, in coordination with the relevant peace operation and sub-regional organisations. The language, however, was subject to similar limitations as the preceding discussion. These are elaborated in the next section, which also highlights some of the on-the-ground impacts of text production for regional peace and security efforts, although these will be developed further in Chapter 9.

8.3. Mandating regional peace and security: regional and inter-mission cooperation

As mentioned above, cooperation on regional peace and security is one area in which evolving peacekeeping thinking has been apparent in Security Council resolutions but also serves as a useful example of how templating and circular reporting can constrain on-the-ground peacebuilding practice. As Table A5.1 in Annex 5 shows, and as discussed in previous chapters, regional security concerns were recognised in the Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire peacekeeping mandates from the start. As already indicated, these included strikingly similar language across the missions, as the following clauses from the different start-up resolutions demonstrate (emphasis mine):

'Determining that the situation in **Sierra Leone** continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security in the region' (United Nations Security Council 1999: 1);

'*Determining* that the situation in **Liberia** continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security in the region, to stability in the West Africa subregion, and to the peace process for Liberia' (United Nations Security Council 2003c: 3); and

'...*determining* that the situation in **Côte d'Ivoire** continues to pose a threat to international peace and security in the region' (United Nations Security Council 2004: 2).

And again:

'*Noting* that lasting stability in **Liberia** will depend on peace in the subregion, and emphasizing the importance of cooperation among the countries of the subregion to this end, as well as the need for coordination of United Nations efforts to contribute to the consolidation of peace and security in the subregion' (United Nations Security Council 2003c: 3); and

'*Noting* that lasting stability in **Côte d'Ivoire** will depend on peace in the subregion, especially in Liberia, and *emphasizing* the importance of cooperation among the countries of the subregion to this end, as well as the need for co-ordination of the efforts of the United Nations Missions in the subregion to contribute to the consolidation of peace and security (United Nations Security Council 2004: 2).

Notwithstanding this seeming copy-and-paste, a closer look at the operative clauses does demonstrate evolving thinking related to the importance of a regional

perspective. For instance, the 1999 UNAMSIL resolution ‘stressed the need for close cooperation and coordination between ECOMOG and UNAMSIL in carrying out their respective tasks’ (United Nations Security Council 1999: 1). In the 2003 Liberian resolution, taking a stronger stance, the Security Council reiterated ‘its demand that all States in the region cease military support for armed groups in neighbouring countries, take action to prevent armed individuals and groups from using their territory to prepare and commit attacks on neighbouring countries and refrain from any actions that might contribute to further destabilization of the situation in the region, and declare[d] its readiness to consider necessary, ways of promoting compliance with this demand’ (United Nations Security Council 2003c: 5). The 2004 UNOCI resolution also contained robust references to regional cooperation, including requesting the Secretary-General to ‘encourage the United Nations missions in West Africa to share logistic and administrative support, to the extent possible . . . in order to maximize effectiveness and minimize the cost of the missions’ (OP3). It also requested UNOCI to ‘carry out its mandate in close liaison with the United Nations missions in Sierra Leone and in Liberia, including especially in the prevention of movements of arms and combatants across shared borders and the implementation of disarmament and demobilization programmes’ (OP4). Additionally, it called upon UNOCI to ‘assist the Government of National Reconciliation in monitoring the borders, with particular attention to the situation of Liberian refugees and to the movement of combatants’ (OP6c); ‘coordinate closely with the United Nations missions in Sierra Leone and in Liberia in the implementation of a voluntary repatriation and resettlement programme for foreign ex-combatants, with special attention to the specific needs of women and children’ (OP6f); and ensure that the national DDR programme took into account a regional approach (United Nations Security Council 2004a: 2–3).

This language spread to the resolutions renewing the mandates of the other two missions as well. For instance, S/Res 1537 (2004) requested UNAMSIL to ‘share its experience with the United Nations Mission in Liberia and the United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire and to carry out its mandate in close liaison with them, especially in the prevention of movements of arms and combatants across borders and in the implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

programmes.’ The Secretary-General and the Security Council went a step further, as by 2004 it was apparent that a more strategic approach to collaboration was necessary, rather than ad hoc reinforcement in the various resolutions. In his March 2004 report on UNAMSIL the Secretary-General indicated his intention to ‘submit recommendations to the Security Council concerning mechanisms and activities that could be introduced to facilitate inter-mission cooperation and cross-border operations between the three United Nations peacekeeping missions in the West Africa subregion’ (United Nations Security Council, 2005a: 1). This resulted in the ‘Report of the Secretary-General on inter-mission cooperation and possible cross-border operations between the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, the United Nations Mission in Liberia and the United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire’, submitted to the Security Council in March 2005, which described existing inter-mission cooperation (IMC) activities and identified possible areas for future cooperation in the areas of information-sharing and joint planning; military operations; DDR and arms control measures; civilian police operations; human rights; child protection; humanitarian assistance; civil affairs; rule of law; public information; administration; and logistics. An immediate impact of this was the inclusion of IMC arrangements in the next sub-regional peace operation’s mandate resolution, which was for UNOCI, S/Res 1609 (2005), wherein OPs 4–6 authorised the Secretary-General to redeploy police and military units between UNAMSIL, UNMIL and UNOCI to ‘address challenges that could not be handled within the authorized personnel ceiling of a given mission’ (United Nations Security Council 2005: 5), albeit with certain conditions, and with consideration of the associated political, operational and legal implications.

It should be noted, however, that while the report’s recommendations were wide in scope, in subsequent resolutions the Security Council prioritised military cooperation and arrangements with troop-contributing countries. In any case, with the closure of UNAMSIL in 2005, and domestic preoccupations such as national elections, the language of inter-mission cooperation largely fell by the wayside, and at the height of the 2010–2011 Ivoirian post-electoral crisis the resolution-making process was not dynamic enough to capture the importance of cross-border collaboration in successive UNOCI resolutions immediately following the crisis, including 1962 (2010) and 1968

(2011), beyond a focus on the sharing of military components and equipment. S/Res 1980 of 28 April 2011 went a bit further, calling upon ‘the authorities of Côte d’Ivoire and Liberia to coordinate their action’ and further encouraged ‘UNOCI and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), within their respective mandates, capabilities and areas of deployment, to assist respectively the Governments of Côte d’Ivoire and Liberia in monitoring their border, with particular attention to any cross border movement of combatants or transfer of arms’ (pp. 2–3). Soon after, S/Res 1981 of 13 May 2011 requested the Secretary-General to keep it informed of measures taken and coordination efforts by

UNOCI and UNMIL to assist respectively the Governments of Côte d’Ivoire and Liberia in monitoring their border and surrounding areas, including on how the redeployed assets are assisting in this effort, with particular attention to any cross border movement of combatants or transfer of arms, and in this regard *encourage[d]* UNOCI and UNMIL, within their mandates and limits of capabilities and areas of deployment, to assist respectively the Governments of Côte d’Ivoire and of Liberia jointly in disarming those endangering national reconciliation and the consolidation of peace. (United Nations Security Council 2011a: 2)

These and two subsequent resolutions on Côte d’Ivoire (S/Res 1992 of June 2011 and S/Res 2000 of July 2011) still focused disproportionately on military hardware, however, and a more dynamic approach had to wait for UNMIL’s resolution a couple of months later (S/Res 2008 of September 2011) to spotlight the issue in a more holistic manner. This resolution included four operative clauses relating to regional peace and security, including reaffirming IMC arrangements (and calling on troop-contributing countries (TCCs) to support efforts); the need for the two missions to coordinate their border strategies and operations ‘in order to contribute to sub-regional security and to prevent armed groups from exploiting the seam of political boundaries’; the need for the donor community to support responses to the influx of Ivoirian refugees; and encouraging ‘ECOWAS, with the support of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) to develop a sub-regional strategy to address the threat of the cross-border movements of armed groups and weapons as well as illicit trafficking, with the assistance of UNMIL and UNOCI, as appropriate’ (United Nations Security Council 2011b: 3–4).

Once it was on the agenda, however, as with other issues, from one year to the next, the language remained largely unchanged and was in fact largely replicated between UNMIL and UNOCI resolutions. Table A5.2 in Annex 5: Examples of common mandate language across missions and over time demonstrates this, with a summary of regional and inter-mission cooperation language in UNMIL resolutions since the 2010–2011 Ivoirian electoral crisis. The text is extensively reproduced in the table to give the reader an appreciation of the repetitious nature of the mandate language. The language for UNOCI's resolution for 2012 is included in the same table in blue, to demonstrate the similarity in language once regional issues had been factored in.

As mentioned above, similarity in language is not necessarily problematic – in fact, in relation to inter-mission cooperation, it was important for UNMIL and UNOCI to have common mandates, enabling them to provide common support both to their host governments and enhance their inter-mission cooperation arrangements. Calling upon them year on year to continue to address certain issues continued to highlight the importance of those issues. As will be discussed in the next chapter, however, regarding IMC, common and repeated mandate language was not sufficient, or indeed appropriate, to address the issues, related in part to some of the issues discussed above, including lack of independence to plan on the ground, and out of sync planning, budgeting and reporting cycles.

These critiques notwithstanding, there was some limited evolution in IMC mandate language, but which had both positive and negative effects. At first, when sub-regional cooperation was mandated following the Ivoirian electoral crisis, it omitted the two governments from its considerations, even though the Liberian Government was already playing host to hundreds of thousands of refugees. This was later amended with responsibility increasingly falling on the two governments, with the missions in a supporting role (accordingly, governmental efforts are discussed in Chapter 10). Conversely, in the initial stages, a prominent role for sub-regional organisations, particularly ECOWAS and MRU, was highlighted (discussed in greater detail in the next chapter), but this tapered off in subsequent UNMIL resolutions – although they were still included in the UNOCI resolution, potentially creating an imbalance in the focus. Further imbalance was potentially created in that S/Res 2283, which authorised

UNOCI's final resolution, continued to prioritise IMC, albeit with a reduced role for the two missions (United Nations Security Council 2016a), whereas it nearly completely fell off UNMIL's interim resolution, S/Res 2308 in September 2016 (United Nations Security Council 2016b), and was included mainly with reference to the regional quick reaction force (RQRF) in its final resolution, S/Res 2333 in December 2016 (United Nations Security Council 2016c).

Two things are further worth noting here. Firstly, the consistent call for the disarmament of 'foreign armed elements on both sides of the border' was exceedingly narrow, limiting insecurity to threats from cross-border mercenaries; thus, the scope provided for an on-the-ground response was correspondingly narrow, for instance, cross-border joint military patrols. In the mandates IMC was mostly spelt out in relation to cooperation on military matters, especially equipment, even though these were largely redundant as UNOCI claimed the lion's share of flight time with the helicopters, to the extent that UNMIL barely considered them an available asset. Further, it was widely recognised in-mission that the much-mentioned 'Regional Quick Reaction Force' did not have a rapid enough deployment capacity to support UNMIL if this was ever urgently required. Yet, as Table A5.2 demonstrates, later resolutions – including UNMIL's latest, as noted above – increasingly emphasised this 'hardware' of peace and security – military equipment and troops – as opposed to the software of social cohesion and confidence building.

It is also worthwhile to note that this militarisation also increasingly encompassed humanitarian issues. Subsequent to the 2013 resolution, when there were still over 30,000 Ivoirian refugees residing in Liberia, refugees were only mentioned in relation to armed elements (or at least in the same breath: 'support the disarmament and repatriation of armed elements on both sides of the border and the voluntary return of refugees in safety and dignity'), whereas previously they had been listed as a separate humanitarian issue.

While many of these issues relate to mandate language, IMC peacebuilding practice on the ground also struggled to implement potentially innovative but inherently complicated approaches, such as cross-border DDR, which the resolutions also

consistently called for after 2012 but went unaddressed. Again, this will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, but relating it to the above discussion, this could be seen as a result of a lack of capacity on the ground⁴⁷ to creatively address the issue, aided by the lack of an effective and accountable system for planning and reporting against the mandate.

A related constraint was that though laudable, IMC was taking place within the context of two different missions, which had very different relationships with their host governments (and indeed host governments with widely differing capacities). Further, in keeping with their host governments, the missions also had different readings on regional security, as will be discussed in Chapter 10, wherein the Liberian Government was concerned with promoting (internal) security, while the Ivoirian Government couched border-related insecurity as an issue of 'defence' against external threats. The differing perspectives on border attacks in 2015 and 2016 as discussed above are a case in point (with Liberia understanding it to be an Ivoirian issue but Ivoirians still claiming a cross-border dimension). Further, although coordinated planning took place in terms of IMC activities on the ground, this was in the context of different mandate implementation priorities, such that this planning did not extend to planning for common RBB outputs, for instance. (An example of the resulting mismatch is that one year one mission committed to undertaking three joint border assessments with the other mission, while the other had only listed one joint assessment for the same year.) These few examples demonstrate the layer of complexity facing peace operations' efforts to think beyond national borders, in addition to the day-to-day constraints posed by working within the peacekeeping/peacebuilding spectrum.

8.4. Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide a backdrop for the discussion in the next two chapters about peacebuilding responses to the regional combatant motivations discussed in the preceding two chapters, by elaborating on the context

⁴⁷ I am unfortunately able to put myself squarely in the frame regarding this issue, as one of the persons at UNMIL who would have been responsible for the implementation of this directive!

within which these responses are framed. It brings home some of the critiques of peace operations elaborated from the literature in Chapter 4, including an overly managerial approach, lack of engagement with systemic structural causes of conflict, a preoccupation with liberal democracy, and planning predicated on short timeframes with rigid parameters.

It further expounded on the factors that influence the creation of the primary textual policies that govern and guide peace operations, that is Security Council resolutions, from which peace operations derive their mandates. Further, it discussed the relationship between various levels of peacebuilders with these texts, and the discourses that arise and are perpetuated or are avoided by this interaction.

In many ways, the discussion above resonates with 'policy as text' and 'policy as discourse' debates (Ball 1993: 10, 11). Although speaking at the level of the state, Ball (1993, 2000) is instructive here, noting that in relation to 'policy as text' we can consider

policies as representations which are encoded in complex ways (via struggles, compromises, authoritative public interpretations and reinterpretations) and decoded in complex ways (via actors' interpretations and meanings in relation to their history, experiences, skills, resources and context) . . . [thus] it is crucial to recognise that the policies themselves, the texts, are (a) not necessarily clear or closed or complete. The texts are the product of compromises at various stages at points of initial influence, in the micropolitics of legislative formulation, in the parliamentary process and in the politics and micropolitics of interest group articulation. . . . (b) Policies shift and change their meaning in the arena of politics . . . Policies are represented differently by different actors and interests . . . At all stages in the policy process we are confronted both with different interpretations of policy, and with what Rizvi and Kemmis (1987) call 'interpretations of interpretations'. (Ball 1993: 11)

Ball goes on to note that while policies (in this case peace operations' Security Council resolution/mandates) do not normally explicitly tell you what to do, they do create circumstances in which the range of options available in deciding what to do are narrowed or changed, requiring a response to be put together (for instance the RBB budget document), constructed in context and off-set against other expectations (Ball 1993: 12).

At the same time, the above discussion should also compel us to think about 'policy as discourse':

discourses are about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority. Discourses embody the meaning and use of propositions and words. Thus, certain possibilities for thought are constructed. Words are ordered and combined in particular ways and other combinations are displaced or excluded [and within these constraints] we take up the positions constructed for us within policies'. (Ball 1993: 14)

There are two perspectives we can gain from viewing policy as texts and policy as discourse. One is that 'texts matter, because they contain policy, but we cannot predict or assume how they will be acted on, what their immediate effect will be, what room for manoeuvre actors will find for themselves' (ibid.). Secondly, 'there are real struggles over the interpretation and enactment of policies. [b]ut these are set within a moving discursive frame which articulates and constrains the possibilities and probabilities of interpretation and enactment (ibid.).

In relation to this, UN Security Council resolutions are akin to the ultimate policy and discursive texts. As the UN editing guidelines for resolutions innocuously puts it: 'Once adopted, these important international instruments belong to the world. Many of them will be cited for years, even decades, to come' (United Nations n.d.: 1). Subjected as they are to extensive negotiation between powerful member states with highly differentiated interests and at the same time subjected to practical financial and other considerations, it is not difficult to understand why the resulting Security Council resolutions are perceived by peacebuilders on the ground as (sometimes unreasonable) 'mandates from on high', giving them the impression that their actions are constrained by decision-making beyond their control. Be that as it may, there is no shortage of regularised reporting from field-based peacebuilders to the Secretariat in New York and onward to member states, which means that these same policies are significantly informed – at least theoretically – by regular reporting from field missions to the Secretariat. As discussed in the preceding sections, however, in the progressive formalisation of the text – that is, from the translation of this casual daily and other periodic reporting into strategic policy advice, via progress reports of the Secretary-General or budget or performance reporting documents, leading ultimately to a peace operation's resolution adopted by Security Council – a significant amount of nuance and detail is lost.

Also, as discussed in the preceding sections, this process of progressively formalising text results in at least two mutually reinforcing problematic outcomes. Firstly, at all levels, from member states downwards, UN peacekeeping mandates appear subject to a circular approach that results in the standardisation of language at headquarters, which return the same well-trodden and eventually ignored phrases time and again in resolutions, and heavily negotiated mandates that do not necessarily reflect the on-the-ground realities and priorities and are not dynamic enough, except in extreme cases, to react to the often rapidly changing dynamics that characterise peace operations' settings, such as those in which regional combatants operate. Secondly, regular results-based budgeting and reporting practices at field level results in a 'navel-gazing' approach that leaves little scope for innovative or out-of-the-box thinking. It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that on-the-ground peacebuilders are powerless receivers of policy. Indeed, again as has been discussed, within their limitations field-based peacebuilders exercise their (albeit limited) power by undertaking a range of subversive actions, including ignoring more problematic aspects of mandates or disguising business-as-usual activities within standardised reporting language, all aided by the same pre-framed policy discourses. As such, the outcome is the same: implementation on the ground is hampered by ritualised, self-limiting activities, which allow the same types of activities to persist without much incentive to champion real change or attempt innovative, response-driven initiatives.

This is particularly problematic in a context where, to overcome perceived constraints of contemporary peace operations, critics have highlighted the importance of creative, context-specific policy guidance from the Secretariat. For instance, Nadin (2004) advocates for 'designer missions', which 'prioritise certain tasks at certain stages in the mission's lifecycle, while retaining a political core at all times' and for '[s]treamlined mandates built on the basis of flexibility and context-sensitivity'. More specifically, the 2000 Brahimi report tasked the Secretariat to 'tell the Security Council what it needs to hear, not what it wants to hear. In situations in which impossible missions have been approved because of confused, unclear, or severely underresourced mandates, the Secretariat has to say "No" to the Security Council' (Weiss and Thakur 2010: 68). It also argued 'that the UN needs to develop a culture of providing advice that is sound, is

based on a thorough assessment of options, is independent of what might be politically popular or might fit the preconceptions of the decision makers, and is free of fear of consequences for politically neutral officials' (ibid.: 68). It is apparent that more than 15 years after this threshold report, this is still not happening.

Ball (1993: 14) observes, '[w]e do not speak a discourse, it speaks us. We are the subjectivities, the voices, the knowledge, the power relations that a discourse constructs and allows. We do not "know" what we say, we "are" what we say and do. In these terms we are spoken by policies, we take up the positions constructed for us within policies'. What does this all mean in practical terms? As noted at the start of this chapter, in contrast, or perhaps more appropriately further to, Autesserre's (2014) concern that on-the-ground peacebuilders do not sufficiently prioritise understanding local realities, the above highlights that the structure of peacebuilding, especially that embodied by the regular production of texts, contributes to limited effectiveness. The next chapter picks up this theme, looking at the impacts on the ground of peacebuilders taking up the positions constructed for them in their implementation of policies, and in particular what they say and do (i.e. their practice) in their efforts to translate the mandates in relation to the on-the-ground realities of regional combatant motivations and to address cross-border and sub-regional conflict.

9. Roadmaps, frameworks and falling short of a strategy: peacebuilding responses to border insecurity

As discussed in previous chapters, the Ivoirian electoral crisis began in November 2010 when President Gbagbo refused to concede that the elections had been won by his opponent, Alassane Ouattara, and lasted for five months until Gbagbo was apprehended in April 2011. The UN Panel of Experts for Côte d'Ivoire estimated that 4,500 Liberian former combatants had been involved in the fighting, and in June 2011, about 220,000 Ivoirian refugees were still seeking shelter in Liberia in refugee camps and host communities along the border. While this had dropped to 67,308 refugees by May 2012 (UNHCR 2012), the situation remained unstable, with periodic cross-border attacks, including the one on 8 June 2012 during which seven UNOCI peacekeepers were killed (again, see Table A1.2 in Annex 1 for a summary of cross-border attacks since the 2010 crisis).

As mentioned in Chapter 8, following the post-electoral crisis, both the UNMIL and UNOCI Security Council resolutions regularly reinforced the importance of inter-mission cooperation and cross-border stabilisation. They variously called on the Ivoirian and Liberian Governments to develop a shared strategy to stabilise their common area, including cross-border DDR; recommended the sharing of military assets, including helicopters for border patrols and subsequently a regional quick reaction force, based in Côte d'Ivoire; requested the international community to support refugees; and called on ECOWAS and the MRU to develop a sub-regional strategy to address the threat of the cross-border movements of armed groups and weapons as well as illicit trafficking (United Nations Security Council 2012b, 2013b, 2014a, 2014b, 2015, 2016a). In response to the crisis and their mandates the two Missions accordingly stepped up their cooperation, which fed into the development of a joint roadmap aimed at coordinated support for security and border control, mirrored community violence reduction activities, support for strengthening state authority, and sustainable return and reintegration, among others (UNMIL/UNOCI 2012). This evolved into an 'Inter-Mission Cooperation Framework of Engagement', signed in July 2014 by the SRSGs of UNMIL and UNOCI, comprising five pillars: (i) enhancing border security and stabilisation; (ii) supporting regional peace and security

efforts and mechanisms; (iii) promoting reconciliation; (iv) addressing humanitarian needs and conditions for sustainable returns; and (v) strengthening information sharing and analysis (UNOCI/UNMIL 2014).

These initiatives represented some of the missions' efforts to support their host governments and translate the mandated IMC tasks into peacebuilding practice on the ground. The extent to which they were able to do so is the subject of this chapter and the next. As such these chapters aim to address sub-questions two and three which query, respectively, the extent to which international peacebuilding institutions take into consideration regional combatants' motivations when developing peacebuilding and regional stabilisation strategies, and the extent to which the resulting strategies have been effective in promoting regional peacebuilding.

9.1. Enhancing border security and stabilisation

The affiliation between Ivoirians and Liberians at certain borders is very strong. After Côte d'Ivoire's [first] war a lot of Liberians stayed in the west [of Côte d'Ivoire] for the elections and in case they would be needed for a plan 'B' (i.e. in case Gbagbo would need them). They stayed in western Côte d'Ivoire making money by farming and trading cocoa, and refused to come back, despite UNMIL missions at the time to encourage them to return when they had rapid employment programmes. However, plan B came and went and with Gbagbo ousted many of them came back. When asked about why they were in Côte d'Ivoire they claimed they were on a 'rescue mission' to support their 'brothers' across the border (this is the Krahn on the Liberia side, who Gbagbo supported [as MODEL] during Liberia's war from 2002, and the Guéré [on the Ivoirian side]. This may seem incongruous but in the wake of Gbagbo's ousting, they are now returning the favour and hosting many Ivoirian militias in their home communities, who've fled Liberia with Ouattara coming to power, especially as Ivoirian DDR is yet to start.

- UNMIL Reintegration Officer, 2 March 2012

9.1.1. Militarised approaches

The above quote, taken from an interview with an UNMIL staff member in March 2012, who had worked on DDR and subsequently on residual reintegration programmes with UNMIL, is highly resonant with the myriad narratives elaborated by Liberian ex-combatants in Chapters 5 and 6. It simultaneously highlights the 'kinship', 'brothers-in-arms', and 'mission' (escalated to that of a 'rescue') narratives. But it concurrently references economic motives ('They stayed in western Côte d'Ivoire making money by farming and trading cocoa, and refused to come back') and rational cost-benefit analysis – preferring the income they were getting from farming and

trading cocoa over 'short-term rapid employment programmes' offered by UNMIL.⁴⁸ It also references the (then) yet-to-begin Ivoirian DDR programme, the inference being that the economic benefits to be derived from that activity would be a significant pull factor for Ivoirian militias to return to Côte d'Ivoire. Through this and other conversations, it was clear that UNMIL and UNOCI staff were quite in tune with on-the-ground perspectives and narratives, and conscious of the need of a holistic approach to address these. Yet consistently, the resulting focus and energies did not appear to reflect these accordingly, with entreaties to 'address the root causes' of cross-border conflict and tension not appearing in the mandates until UNOCI's June 2014 resolution (United Nations Security Council 2014: 6; 10).

Instead, UNMIL and UNOCI approaches to achieving border security and stabilisation remained militarised, responding largely to a narrowly understood mercenary narrative. A prime example of this was Operation MAYO (OP MAYO). OP MAYO was initially established by UNMIL and UNOCI in 2006 as a dual phase operation that brought together Mission and national security counterparts to undertake joint border patrols, followed by structured cross-border meetings intended to strengthen coordination and information sharing. Similar activities were undertaken with national security counterparts in Sierra Leone (Operation LOKO) and Guinea (Operation SESKIN). While it did not have a high profile in intervening years, the post-electoral crisis exposed the need for increased coordination between UNMIL and UNOCI military, police, and civilian components to support the Ivoirian and Liberian Governments to stabilize the situation more effectively, including a focus on addressing the factors underlying the conflict. Accordingly, in 2012, as part of the IMC Roadmap, UNMIL, UNOCI and the respective UN country teams (UNCT) agreed on terms of reference (ToRs) for OP MAYO, which included enhancing civilian participation as a means of stimulating cross-border civilian dialogue and building confidence between Liberian and Ivoirian civilian and security authorities. In this vein,

⁴⁸ This is not captured in the quote, but the staff member is referencing preferences stated as far back as 2008, when UNMIL staff undertook missions to western Côte d'Ivoire to encourage Liberian ex-combatants still residing in Côte d'Ivoire to return to Liberia and take advantage of the soon-closing residual reintegration programmes following the official close of DDR programmes.

a revitalized CONOPS for OP MAYO was adopted in June 2012.⁴⁹ From this period up until 2014, UNMIL and UNOCI undertook regular mirrored border patrols, followed by joint meetings, aimed at bringing together the military, civilian and police components of both missions, as well as, increasingly, both Governments' security agencies, local officials and traditional and community leaders.

On 14 November 2013, I attended an OP MAYO meeting at the Prolo border crossing point, between Maryland County in Liberia and Tabou Prefecture in Côte d'Ivoire. Other participants included UNMIL and UNOCI uniformed personnel (Force, Military Observers (MILOBs), Police) and civilian staff; Ivoirian security personnel (*Forces Républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire* (FRCI), Gendarmerie, Police and Customs) and local authority (the *sous-préfet* of Tabou); Liberian security personnel (Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization (BIN), Police, National Security); and UNHCR staff. At the meeting I was struck by how great the chasm was between rhetoric and reality. For instance, despite the first item on the agenda being a 'joint patrol briefing', coordination between UNOCI and UNMIL security forces was poor during the patrols, which resulted in each undertaking a different scale of patrolling operations, rather than them being joint, or even mirrored. This was exacerbated by continued problems with their ability to communicate with one another while on patrol, and the two groups were not aware of the details of each other's radio frequency and areas of coverage. This was despite lauding of innovative joint patrolling in regular reporting.

Secondly, I noted the highly skewed composition of participants in favour of uniformed personnel: despite the explicitly referenced need to grow civilian participation, there were about 40 uniformed participants and only five civilian participants, four of whom, including myself, were associated with the UN and only one (Ivoirian) civilian authority, but no Liberian administrative authority, which I was told had not been represented for the last three meetings. Further, even among uniformed personnel, there were only three representatives from Liberian security agencies. Moreover, despite a more robust Ivoirian security personnel presence, their active participation in the meeting

⁴⁹ Interview with UNMIL staff member, August 2013.

was limited (with the exception of one FRCI officer). Partly this was because the participants' areas of operations, and thus authority, were limited (e.g. the BIN officer present was the Commander for that particular Liberian border post and could not speak of BIN operations in a wider context).

Finally, I observed that although overall the military observers described the security situation in their patrol areas as peaceful, they also started to narrate a host of concerns fed back by communities visited, relating to lack of potable water, healthcare facilities, access to markets, and so on. These were cut short by the chairman (an UNOCI military officer), as irrelevant, as not pertaining to physical security threats, to me a stark reminder that despite lip service to the contrary, much of the focus remained on physical security rather than human security. Further, I thought that if civilian concerns were given greater priority, it would encourage civilian authorities to participate more and provide a useful opportunity for border communities to communicate pertinent issues, particularly given their lack of access and trust in those same authorities. In all, the meeting felt like a wasted opportunity. It was organised and chaired by military peacekeeping personnel, as opposed to police or even civilian staff, which automatically retained a focus on physical security rather than root causes; the focus of the meetings was to relate any physical security concerns or threats, and human security issues were not entertained. It was also dominated by UN personnel, providing little opportunity for national counterparts to be involved. It was apparent from attending that meeting and reading the preparation documents and minutes of numerous other meetings that the structure and content of the meetings retained a narrow focus, with the main aim of the patrols being to collect information about various incidents, rumours about the presence of militias and mercenaries, with agenda items focusing on the security situation and the state of militia/mercenaries in the border area, as well as illegal border crossing, arms and drugs trafficking, and the state of refugees (in the context of the suspected presence of militia and mercenaries among them, discussed below).

Yet, as a relatively simple activity to undertake, the bi-monthly OP MAYO meetings were presented externally as the 'gold standard' of the evolving inter-mission

cooperation between UNMIL and UNOCI, and often reported as a prime example of not just joint security operations between the two countries but also as a forum for coordination to address root causes of the conflict. The meetings eventually fell by the wayside as the peacekeeping military components in both countries were drawn down, while civilian IMC officers⁵⁰ sought to both transition the structure to national counterparts and make it more inclusive. The main avenue for doing this was to transition to the Mano River Union's Joint Border Security and Confidence Building Units (JBSCBUs) which, as section 9.2 shows, was rife with its own shortcomings.

This focus on physical security was also replicated by national actors, particularly Operation Restore Hope, led by the Armed Forces of Liberia, as discussed in the next chapter. Nonetheless, seemingly cognisant of the limitations of such approaches, the missions, UN agencies, funds and programmes (AFPs), and several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) did make efforts to broaden the perspective. These efforts demonstrated a broad understanding of human insecurity (particularly food and economic insecurity) as a root cause of conflict, expanded to include not just participants of the conflicts but border communities as a whole. In these programmes the logic of the 'micro-region' elaborated in Chapter 6 was welcomingly apparent but even so, the resulting programmes demonstrated a misplaced focus. They also demonstrated many of the typical shortcomings of development programmes, but to dwell on these would be outside the scope of this thesis. Instead, the following brief discussion focuses on those practices, habits and narratives that limited effective engagement with regional combatants' narratives. It elaborates on initiatives undertaken by the UN AFPs who, together with UNMIL and UNOCI in their respective host countries, operate under a One UN framework. In 2016 there were at least six UN-associated border stabilisation-related projects being implemented. There is not

⁵⁰ IMC coordination in UNMIL was the responsibility of the Regional and Inter-Mission Cooperation Support Unit (RIMCSU), which was proposed in UNMIL's budget proposal for 2013/14 'to enhance the Mission's strategic focus on regional issues and structured coordination of IMC, as well as to address, through an integrated approach, all border related issues, including both security related and underlying stabilization issues, in close coordination with national actors and relevant members of the UNCT' (RIMCSU draft TORs). The following year it was merged with the Field Support Team, while UNOCI set up its Field Coordination and Inter-Mission Cooperation Unit.

the space to go into each, so the next section considers one of the earliest iterations, with pertinent observations on the other initiatives.

9.1.2. Beyond militarised approaches: towards a human security perspective

In 2012, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) conducted a cross-border food security assessment, financed by UNDP, subsequently published as the report, 'On the Borderline: A Report for Food Security on the Liberian-Ivoirian Border', which was also informed by research undertaken by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). It highlighted the need to address underlying poverty, as well as ethnic discord, land tenure issues and lack of social cohesion, which it contended would fuel future wars and instability if not addressed (Food and Agriculture Organization 2012). In relation to food security particularly, it noted ongoing land disputes and the interruption of cross-border trade leading to dysfunction in markets in both countries.

The recommendations highlighted the importance of rehabilitating markets, construction and distribution of storage facilities, and the creation, harmonization and dissemination of agricultural technologies in Liberia, as well as the implementation of a continuous market Monitoring System in the region (Food and Agriculture Organization 2012). This resulted in the development of a three-year (2013–2016) Cross-border Action Plan for food security and nutrition, endorsed by both UN missions, with three cross-cutting objectives related to food security, land tenure and social cohesion. The European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) provided initial funding for the project, which was subsequently implemented by FAO and the DRC on the Liberian side.

In reading the report and the strategy that resulted from the assessment, several observations could be made. In the first place, it appeared (at least to me) a case of fitting the solution not to the problem but to the capacity of the organisation. For instance, while the report identified such issues as ethnic discord, land tenure issues and lack of social cohesion contributing to ongoing instability, its solution was wholly related to agriculture programmes – not surprising given FAO's focus but somewhat

problematic, because although this provided a nod to economic motives, it did not consider this in the context of its own findings. For instance, in the report FAO notes: 'Many of the Liberian mercenaries that were involved in the fighting during the post-election crisis in Côte d'Ivoire were recruited in illegal mining areas in Grand Gedeh (South-East Liberia). These are places of potential exploitation, trafficking, and mobilization of youth for participation in conflicts, whenever the opportunity arises.' But subsequent programming did not take these livelihoods into consideration, nor did they include any explicit strategy to incorporate the problematic 'mercenaries' in their programmes.

In relation to this latter point, the same UNMIL staff member quoted at the start of this section went on to note:

[returnees and high risk youth] don't get automatically incorporated in the programmes because as relative strangers and former militias people are sceptical about including them in traditional structures such as farming groups which often make up the base for training. Returning militias do not have the social capital and are not part of the social networks so miss out on opportunities in training programmes where recruitment is not an open process.

This highlighted a two-fold problem with the nature of programmes subsequently developed, which largely focused on boosting subsistence farming surpluses for local markets. While an important development initiative for the Liberian context, it did not address the specificities of cross-border insecurity. For instance, it did not consider preferred alternative livelihoods for vulnerable populations (including regional ex-combatants), such as artisanal mining,⁵¹ which, as discussed in Chapter 6, was a preferred option for young men with limited social networks, or commercial farming, which many had been involved with previously.⁵² Secondly, although the reports highlighted the problem of young rootless men as a cause of conflict, even if they were interested in subsistence farming (which as discussed in Chapter 7 was unlikely), it did

⁵¹ The FAO project was not alone in this. At the time of writing there were no appreciable programmes aimed at the artisanal mining sector, which has absorbed a significant proportion of combatants (including cross-border).

⁵² This was not only in Côte d'Ivoire. In Liberia at least three large-scale commercial rubber plantations were taken over and operated by ex-combatants (including cross-border) until the government regained control and expelled them from the plantations.

not really consider how supporting existing farming networks could serve to further exclude ex-combatants. Kinship narratives notwithstanding, ex-combatants, even if returning to home towns, were treated with suspicion and fear, as they themselves noted when interviewed. As such, lacking the aforementioned networks, which are critical in rural agriculture, food security projects were unlikely to include them and may have served to alienate them even further. Best practice reintegration programming has highlighted the importance of community-based rather than ex-combatant focused approaches but it is still important for these to include them.

Many subsequent programmes faced the same constraints. A significant example was a US\$3.25 million project that arose from the one discussed above, funded by the UN Trustfund for Human Security (UNTFHS), involving six different UN agencies, with support from UNMIL, implementing a holistic human security project, incorporating political, economic, community, food and health security in Liberia's four counties bordering Côte d'Ivoire. Its proposal noted that Liberia's south-eastern counties continued to face challenges of 'hunger, instability, and low human development, all underlying drivers of conflict and thus dangers to continued peace and security' (UN Country Team in Liberia 2013: 2). It proposed a 'Human Security Initiative' (ibid.) to address the multi-sectorial causes of human insecurity for the most vulnerable and neglected populations of the south-eastern Liberia, and which would also support efforts of the UNCT and UN Missions in both Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire to achieve long-term stabilization in the common border region.

Despite the worthy ambitions, the reality of implementation suffered many of the constraints highlighted in the previous section. Chief among these was the 'business as usual' approach that seemingly characterises UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding approaches, especially as the Trustfund provided part funding, so each agency relied on other or prior sources of funding for implementation, and for the most part used the extra funding to implement the same projects that they had been implementing in other parts of the country but just expanding coverage, at most to the same

communities as the other agencies, without committing to a transformative theory of change, resulting in more of the same.⁵³

Another shortcoming of this programme was that it was undertaken only in Liberia, without a mirrored approach in Côte d'Ivoire. In 2015, however, the two countries' UN Country Teams developed a comprehensive joint border security and stabilisation proposal to be funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). After much wrangling, the livelihoods and food security component had to be dropped as being outside the scope of PBF funding, in favour of capacity strengthening of border security agencies, and improving social cohesion between border communities (thus addressing social cohesion narratives, which are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 10). Subsequent efforts to provide this component as complementary through UNMIL assessed funding had to be dropped for many of the same reasons. This was despite the mandate's entreaty (at least in 2014 and 2015) to address the 'root causes of conflict', because, as a UN colleague noted during one of the heated discussions on the topic, 'nowhere in the resolution does it say "livelihoods"!'. This was against a backdrop of several social cohesion programmes already being implemented, comprising for the most part ad hoc cross-border meetings and capacitating security officials with logistical equipment with the logic that this would make them more responsive to communities but with no real medium- to long-term focus on sustainability and maintenance in either scenario.

Adherence to a limited set of narratives essentially meant that regional ex-combatants were inadequately targeted in stabilisation programming, aided by an inflexible approach to peacekeeping and peacebuilding that meant that root causes could not be addressed, even after they were included (albeit belatedly and not spelt out) in the mandates. Further, while root causes were subsequently highlighted in the mandates, this coincided with UNMIL and UNOCI drawdown. In light of this, the two missions considered enhancing their approach in relation to another mission directive – to support sub-regional organisations – with similarly limited results, as detailed in the next section.

⁵³ This assessment is based on participant-observation of the first year of project implementation.

9.2. *Support regional peace and security efforts and mechanisms*

In November 2012 UNOWA (now UNOWAS) drafted a position paper, with inputs from UNMIL and UNOCI in relation to the Security Council's request for 'ECOWAS and the Mano River Union to develop, with the support of UNOWA, a sub-regional strategy to address the threat of the cross-border movements of armed groups and weapons as well as illicit trafficking, with the assistance of UNOCI and UNMIL, as appropriate' (United Nations Security Council 2012b: 5). In it, they proposed a three-track approach to feed 'into the development of a subregional security strategy by ECOWAS and the MRU, should *they* deem it appropriate' (emphasis mine, rightly highlighting that some of the Security Council's requests were outside the control of the UN and as such difficult to measure against the missions' own deliverables). Track 1 advocated for ongoing IMC arrangements between UNMIL and UNOCI, alongside a quadripartite coordination mechanism with their host governments (which will be discussed in the next chapter). Track 2 would see UNOWA, together with the UN system in the sub-region, identify concrete ways to assist both the MRU and ECOWAS in addressing cross-border related threats and to pursue confidence building measures. Track 3 would link these initiatives with the wider sub-region, for instance the Sahel, and such initiatives as counter-piracy.

The act of drafting the paper was recognition in of itself of the difficulty in carrying out a mandated task (mandated, no less, of three UN organisations – UNOWA, UNMIL and UNOCI). It highlighted that what was being requested was not in the hands of the UN entities but rather the responsibility of sub-regional organisations (as will be seen below, a similar, valid, argument was in relation to the Council's entreaties to the two countries to implement cross-border DDR and a shared strategy for cross-border stabilisation). Notwithstanding, the three UN entities were able to consider supporting related initiatives by the Mano River Union (MRU), including an MRU Operational Plan for Peace and Security in 2012, which was closely followed by a 'Strategy for Cross-border security in the Mano River Union', signed by members' heads of state in October 2013. Developed with extensive support from UNOWA and UNDP, with inputs from the UNMIL and UNOCI, this at least was a seeming culmination of the Security

Council's consistent entreaty for a cross-border strategy. The Strategy had six main aims: enhancing security cooperation for peace; promoting political and economic governance; boosting economic opportunities through infrastructural development; improving management of natural resources; security-related interventions aimed at violence management; and structural measures, all a nod to root causes of insecurity. The two documents were an ambitious undertaking for a four-country⁵⁴ international organisation which received a modest operational budget from member states' dues (often in arrears), and relied largely on external donor funding for programmatic activities.⁵⁵

Prior to its finalisation UNMIL noted and shared several concerns relating to the strategy with its drafters. These included that it lacked several elements of a strategy, including a framework to determine how the inventory of problems stated would be addressed, who would be responsible and supporting parties, how the interventions would be financed and the lack of a timeframe. The mission also cautioned against rushing to validate a proposal that would prove difficult to implement, and queried how it would link to pre-existing documents, such as the 2012 plan, which also had yet to be operationalised. Further, the document did not explain how it planned to address or coordinate action to address immediate cross-border security concerns, and how these would relate to medium- to longer-term structural issues and underlying drivers of conflict that also needed to be addressed. Finally, the mission noted that while the strategy envisioned a central role of MRU Joint Border Security and Confidence Building Units (JBSCBUs, see below), it did not describe what they were or how they were to deliver on what was expected of them in the strategy (UNMIL draft comments, October 2013).

Notwithstanding these substantive concerns, the strategy was signed, with the two missions and UNOWA committed to supporting its implementation, in line with the

⁵⁴ The reader will recall that the Mano River Union was established in 1973 between Liberia and Sierra Leone, with Guinea joining in 1980 and Côte d'Ivoire in 2008.

⁵⁵ Communicated during conversations with MRU Secretariat senior leadership and representatives in 2015 and 2016. This was especially the case following the Ebola outbreak in 2014 as three of the four countries devoted significant resources to combating the crisis.

mandate. Particularly, the two missions seized on JBSCBUs as the possible successor for OP MAYO. JBSCBUs, mandated by the Fifteenth Protocol to the Mano River Union Declaration on Cooperation on Peace, Security and Defence, were originally signed in 1992 but revised and signed by the four heads of state, now including Côte d'Ivoire, in 2012. The aim of the JBSCBUs is to bring together a cross-section of local security, civilian and traditional authorities, civil society, peacebuilders and leaders from the border counties and districts of the Mano River Union and neighbouring countries, as relevant, to organise and conduct joint patrols of the borders; develop, facilitate, and promote cordial relations between people in the border regions through cultural, social and sporting activities; exchange information and investigate reports with regard to border security; and resolve minor cases of border security violations, among other activities (Mano River Union 2012). While the Fifteenth Protocol notes that establishing JBSCBUs is the responsibility of member states, their inaction prompted the MRU Secretariat to take on responsibility for their establishment and maintenance, through a Peace and Security Unit, based at the Secretariat Headquarters in Freetown, with funding to be obtained through Member States' contributions (still pending at the time of writing in November 2016). Between 2012 and 2014 the MRU facilitated the establishment of 13 JBSCBUs, including nine between Liberia and her three neighbouring MRU countries, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone and Guinea; however, their activities were curtailed firstly by the lack of sustainable funding and secondly by the Ebola crisis.

Within UNMIL I was tasked with supporting this initiative particularly in the context of transition from OP MAYO and UNMIL drawdown, and while the concept had possibilities, my engagement gave me many reasons to doubt its sustainability. In December 2013, I was invited to attend an NGO validation of the strategy in Freetown during which much of the discussion related to complaints from assembled NGOs that they had not been involved in the articulation of the strategy which they being called on to validate, followed by concerns about funding their involvement in its implementation. I attended a second meeting in Abidjan in April 2014 to finalise the cross-border security strategy's implementation plan and present it to potential donors. Between then and the time of writing in 2016, none of the projects in the

implementation plan had been initiated, save for modest uncoordinated efforts (including those of UNMIL) to reactivate the JBSCBUs. In May 2016, I attended the third MRU technical and ministerial meeting on peace and security in Abidjan. The meeting brought home to me all the potentials and pitfalls of the involvement of a sub-regional economic body in peace and security. The three-day meeting, which tackled three weighty topics of counter-terrorism, maritime security and enhanced border security (including the role of the JBSCBUs) was characterised by participants – mostly deputies from the police, immigration, defence, national security, armed forces and maritime sectors – alternating between bemusement and confusion about the purpose of the MRU in relation to these topics and debating the merits of the body having its own counter-terrorism and maritime strategies when relevant mechanisms already existed at ECOWAS, AU and international levels, and enthusiastic and vociferous debate of the finer points of the Memorandum of Understanding and the framework under review.

On 30 June 2016, I attended yet another MRU meeting aimed at reactivating JBSCBUs in Liberia. This was slightly different as it was funded by UNMIL Quick Impact Projects (based on a proposal I had supported the MRU Secretariat to submit). I remained enthusiastically committed to the JBSCBU concept, yet sitting at the meeting listening to the litany of complaints and concerns about the limitations of the units for the job at hand, related to the lack of support provided by the MRU, I could not help but wonder why we as a mission were so bent on providing support to an institution as poorly capacitated as the MRU. Was it simply so we could comply with the Security Council's request for 'the Secretary-General to provide regular updates on progress towards the development of such a sub-regional strategy', as asked in so many mandates? Inasmuch as successive UN peacebuilding reviews (most recently the 2015 High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations report) placed much stock in coordination with regional organisations for maintaining peace and security, adhering to such a state-led process as they did (not least in relation to their reliance on member states for funding and setting priorities), in contexts such as this, what was their real comparative advantage? As desperate as I was, for the sake of my job *and* my thesis, to believe in the value of a regional approach, I could not dismiss how

concerned with survival these (particularly smaller) regional institutions were. Particularly, it seemed to me, the practice of holding meetings and producing strategies and operational plans (all of which they required external support to do), and so on, appeared to be self-aggrandising performances to validate their viability, rather similar to regional combatants' posturing. It occurred to me that these organisations had as limited engagement with the reality on the ground as UN peace operations, if not less so, being much more poorly capacitated, and as such the concern of the new regionalisms approach, related to moving away from formal and inter-state regional networks and their structures, even such potentially innovative ones as the JBSCBUs, seemed to be even more relevant in such spaces.

Of course, compounding the issue was the missions' concern with fulfilling their mandate to work with sub-regional organisations. But while this provides an example of UNMIL working to achieve a mandate requirement, albeit with possibly limited value, there are also examples of the mission failing to make efforts to implement mandate requirements, including one directly related to addressing cross-border motivations, which would have been potentially of great value. We turn to this in the next section.

9.3. *The refugee-DDR conundrum*

As recalled at the start of this chapter, successive Security Council resolutions called upon the Liberian and Ivoirian Governments to develop and implement a shared border strategy to 'inter alia support the disarmament and repatriation of foreign armed elements on both sides of the border and the voluntary return [or repatriation] of refugees' (United Nations Security Council 2013a: 9, 2013b: 5, 2012a: 5, 2012b: 4). Chapter 7 discussed refugee camps as insecure spaces, even as UNHCR and its partners often went to great lengths to ensure that they are *secure*, in no small part by striving to maintain the civilian character of camps. Often, however, the two governments and the missions (and, apparently, the Security Council) considered the camps to be problematic, especially, as discussed in the next chapter, in the face of evidence of

mixed populations moving across the borders who were not adequately screened to identify and separate armed elements from what became the refugee population.

As such, support for the disarmament and repatriation of foreign armed elements, at least on the Liberia side, became intractably linked with the refugee situation. Although UNOCI and UNMIL assessed that Ivoirian militias and Liberian ex-combatants were among the refugee influx, no assessment was undertaken to confirm the scale of movement. Further, as mentioned before, the Liberian Government's decision to grant *prima facie* status to incoming refugees further precluded combatants' identification and separation from the refugee population (the exceptional case is discussed in the next chapter). While the degree of correlation between the refugee population and cross-border violence was unclear, it was evident that an unknown number of ex-fighters and former Ivoirian security personnel had registered as refugees and were living in refugee camps and host communities. Further, Liberian and Ivoirian authorities also directly linked a few of those registered refugees living both inside and outside the camps to cross-border violence. This anecdotal evidence notwithstanding, concern with maintaining the civilian character of the camp made the issue politically sensitive for both the Liberian Government and UNHCR, given the potential implications for humanitarian, human rights, and refugee protection obligations.

9.3.1. Provisions for cross-border DDR in the Ivoirian programme

In July 2012, the Steering Committee of the Ivoirian Technical Working Group on Security Sector Reform adopted a policy paper on DDR and a framework for implementation. It represented an updated approach to the 2004 legal framework provided by the National Demobilization and Reintegration Programme, taking into account the post-election crisis. The regional dimension was given prominence as one of the four overall objectives, namely to strengthen the stability of the state and the sub-region through the development of synergies in the control of trans-boundary movements of armed people (the other objectives were reducing the risk of armed violence through DDR; promoting social cohesion and peace through community and ex-combatant sensitisation; and poverty reduction through sustainable economic reintegration and community rehabilitation) (*Présidence de la République* 2012). In

addition to identifying a target population as ‘everyone of both sexes over 18 years who participated in the battles following the events of September 2002 and/or the post-election crisis of December 2010 as a member of a combat group recognized by the supervising Administrative Authority and who wants to return to civilian life’, the paper further identified nine target groups, each with specific eligibility criteria and definitions. Three categories were of regional significance: resident foreign combatants on Ivoirian soil; non-resident foreign combatants on Ivoirian soil, to be repatriated; and exiled Ivoirian combatants to be repatriated. Technically, the repatriation would include all operations to sensitise, identify, group and return ex-combatants to their country of origin. For exiled Ivoirian ex-combatants, their return would also allow them to be eligible for reintegration programs. The Policy Paper envisaged that these processes would require significant sub-regional collaboration, including the adoption and implementation of agreed/coordinated plans for identifying and repatriating ex-combatants.

This and related documents seemingly signalled a willingness, at least on the part of the Ivoirian government, to consider the Security Council’s request for cross-border DDR. The modalities to kick-start these processes were never elaborated, however. Even if they had been, on the Liberian side, given that Liberian DDR and even post-DDR reintegration programmes had long since ended, it would have been difficult to envisage who would be responsible for providing Liberian ex-combatants with assistance packages upon their return to Liberia. The preceding discussion as well as the mandate language highlights that these efforts should be undertaken by the two governments and as such is a contender for discussion in the next section looking at state-level initiatives. I have chosen to include it here however because, at least on the Liberia side, such an undertaking would have required significant mission engagement, as during the formal DDR process.⁵⁶ Instead, lacking appropriate capacity, the mission floundered, hoping that the issue would go away, which it finally did with the formal end of the DDR programme in Côte d’Ivoire in 2015.

⁵⁶ On the Ivoirian side, the Government, through the national *Autorité pour le Désarmement, la Démobilisation et la Réintégration des Ex-Combattants* (ADDR, or the DDR Authority) took on the primary responsibility for funding and implementing DDR programmes.

This is not to say that the missions and the region did not have some experience with cross-border DDR. In 2003, following the end of Liberia's civil war, UNMIL and UNAMSIL coordinated on options for the repatriation of Sierra Leonean ex-combatants from Liberia, albeit to a limited extent, given that DDR in Sierra Leone had ended.⁵⁷ Since UNMIL's inception in 2003, its RRR programme cooperated closely with UNOCI's DDR programme. Following the end of the Côte d'Ivoire conflict in 2007, the two missions' Joint Mission Analysis Cells, together with DDR (UNOCI) and RRR (UNMIL) developed bi-annual lists of Liberians who were associated with militia in Côte d'Ivoire, and who could possibly pose a threat to Liberia (UNMIL 2011). Further, despite the end of DDR in Liberia, some efforts were made to establish special short-term employment programmes for ex-combatants returning from Côte d'Ivoire, following RRR assessment visits to Guiglo in 2008, in coordination with UNOCI DDR, and meetings with Liberian militia leaders.⁵⁸ By 2012, however, the explicit mandate for RRR had ended, with the reduced unit subsumed under the Civil Affairs Section. Nonetheless, the section was tasked, in coordination with the RIMCSU to consider the parameters of UNMIL's support in the context of the Ivoirian DDR policy, being implemented by the *Autorité pour le Désarmement, la Démobilisation et la Réintégration des Ex-Combattants* (or DDR authority, ADDR).

An UNMIL policy paper subsequently developed noted the importance of practical modalities to identify and voluntarily repatriate Ivoirian ex-fighters, including those with refugee status, who would subsequently be eligible to participate in Ivoirian DDR. In the case of any former fighters registered as refugees, these could have been assisted to return to Côte d'Ivoire as refugees being then at liberty to present themselves for DDR or other reintegration assistance, according to clear eligibility criteria that would have been subject to agreement by the two Governments and relevant agencies.

A main sticking point was UNHCR. In 2012, UNHCR conducted a validation screening exercise that qualified all registered refugees as civilian refugees, as they were

⁵⁷ Discussion with former UNMIL RRR officer, October 2013.

⁵⁸ Interview with former UNMIL RRR Officer, April 2010.

unarmed. As registered refugees in Liberia they were entitled to the rights and international protections guaranteed them by virtue of their status. UNHCR remained adamant that any effort to bring active DDR-related programmes into the camps would create serious protection risks for refugees; compromise the civilian and humanitarian character of the camps; compromise the security of refugees and other persons of concern living in the camps as this may have caused the Liberian security apparatus to perceive them as ex-combatants; and blur and frustrate the ongoing voluntary repatriation process, potentially eroding the already low level of confidence the refugees had in Côte d'Ivoire's peace process.⁵⁹

UNMIL had additional concerns. It was clear from UNMIL assessments that some refugees were not sufficiently convinced that the conditions for their safe and voluntary return to Côte d'Ivoire were in place. Refugees indicated to both UNMIL and UNHCR that they would consider voluntary return to Côte d'Ivoire only when they felt that the Government was making genuine efforts to create the conditions necessary for their safe return. Refugees also shared fears of abuse by Ivoirian security forces, and of being targeted or arrested, if they repatriated. This was considering, among other things, evidence of FRCI spoilers. Additionally, visible and genuine progress towards reconciliation, DDR and security sector reform (SSR), restoring the capacity of and confidence in civilian authorities in western Côte d'Ivoire, and progress with land dispute resolution (particularly given the reported occupation of farms and property in the west by 'Burkinabés')⁶⁰ were among factors cited by refugees as necessary for their voluntary return. It could be assumed that the same concerns applied to former fighters, who likely required further assurances upon return with regard to additional guarantees of safety, ensuring their incorporation into DDR programmes, subsequent monitoring to ensure non-discrimination and non-victimisation, and contingencies for those choosing not to repatriate. This was especially bearing in mind the continued

⁵⁹ Expressed over several meetings and email exchanges with UNCHR and other interlocutors on this issue, including at the October 2013 Joint Council of Chiefs and Elders Meeting (JCCEM) discussed in the next chapter.

⁶⁰ Based on focus group discussions with refugees in November 2012, March 2013, November 2013 and further discussions in February and May 2016.

detention at the time of 41 former fighters extradited by the Liberian government in 2012.

This situation also had to be set against the reality of the programme in Côte d'Ivoire. In 2013 ADDR failed to achieve its ex-combatant reinsertion and reintegration target, with 21,413 out of the target 30,000 ex-combatants participating in relevant programmes.⁶¹ Additionally, while satellite and regional offices were operating in the west (including in Dix-Huit Montagnes and Moyen-Cavally regions), in the south-west progress was slow, with ADDR only opening a regional office in San Pedro in October 2013, with further planned satellite offices delayed.⁶² Also, it was never clear whether an explicit strategy existed to support the ADDR's DDR Policy Paper provisions for the repatriation and participation of foreign-based ex-combatants in Ivoirian DDR, including eligibility criteria, and credible information on tenable reintegration options for a group that, for the most part, violently opposed Ouattara's presidency and who came from areas with few employment options. In any case, relevant engagement never materialised. Instead, ADDR eschewed formal channels and made some unilateral efforts to identify, target and repatriate former Ivoirian fighters residing in Liberia, including clandestine operations among refugee populations and targeted profiling (it was rumoured using lists of pro-Gbagbo militia), which was particularly problematic. This includes an incident in May 2013, during which an ADDR delegation was detained in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County for failing to advise the Government of Liberia of its presence. The breach of protocol left the Liberian Ministries of Defence and Justice angered by the lack of prior notice, let alone a request for authorisation, regarding the mission. This risked upsetting delicate bilateral relations, which the two countries were striving to improve, and which had recently been strengthened through the quadripartite framework, with a quadripartite peace and security meeting between the two Governments, UNMIL and UNOCI having been held just a month previously. Also, given the perceived antagonism against the Ivoirian government by the resident population (as evidenced by the angry reception given to a UNOCI and

⁶¹ This was according to the ADDR website.

⁶² Conversation with UNOCI DDR Officer. The programme came to an official end in June 2015 although it was recognised that residual activities would continue.

Ivoirian delegation during a visit to Solo Refugee Camp in Grand Gedeh in March 2012), the perception that Ivoirian government elements were secretly operating in Liberia, and rumoured to be or actually trying to identify pro-Gbagbo ex-combatants for unknown reasons, raised concerns that this could exacerbate tensions and perhaps even trigger a violent response, particularly among those refugees who even then were expressing a preference to remain long-term in Liberia.

On the Liberian side, however, there were also numerous practical constraints. As mentioned above, there was no relevant Liberian Government counterpart entity to deal with even residual DDR, and thus there was no natural 'counterpart' to whom ADDR could channel its requests. While the DDR programme in Liberia was handed over to the Vice President's office and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, there was no institutional memory and other, perhaps more relevant Ministries, such as Foreign Affairs, Justice, Defense or National Security also faced significant constraints. While the Liberian Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) had been strengthened to enable it to carry out its responsibilities in relation to Ivoirian refugees, in relation to its protection mandate, it also could not be expected to coordinate such an activity.

Ultimately, UNMIL argued that its support to the process could only be limited to repatriation and reintegration of former armed elements, rather than the *disarmament and demobilisation of foreign* armed elements, which implied current mobilisation. The mission also identified several other areas it felt it could provide support. These included assisting in information and sensitisation efforts to enable eligible individuals to make informed decisions; facilitating coordination; monitoring, analysis and information-sharing; promoting a focus on (alternative) cross-cutting issues, such as community violence reduction; and helping to ensure that the international legal frameworks and procedures were followed. This support would, however, be conditioned on the Ivoirian Government's ability to provide satisfactory assurances of combatants' safety upon their return.⁶³ Notwithstanding, UNOCI seemed determined to support the Ivoirian Government's clandestine efforts, such that UNOCI

⁶³ Based on researcher's own records of the process.

staff were temporarily detained alongside ADDR staff in May 2012, having crossed into Liberia without informing UNMIL counterparts, demonstrating a lack of coordination between the two missions despite ongoing efforts to strengthen IMC.

Additionally, arising from the mandate, the mission was unable to separate refugee issues from foreign militias. While this perhaps presented complications because they were considered to be present in the refugee camps, the extent to which these populations overlapped was not known, and very little effort was made to ascertain this – even though significant numbers of Ivoirians, both refugees and non-refugees, were known for instance to be working in the ubiquitous mining camps. One of the possible reasons UNMIL was unable to do this and think through practical support was lack of capacity. UNMIL no longer had a DDR section, and without an obligation to practically align the budget with mandated tasks, UNMIL was not required to make provisions for staff with DDR capacity to undertake the activity.

9.4. Conclusion

Similar to the cross-border DDR example, the other examples in this chapter – border stabilisation and engagement with sub-regional actors – have considered the realities of implementing some of the more innovative yet problematic aspects of UNMIL (and UNOCI's) mandate related to regional and inter-mission cooperation, in ways that resonate with the discussion in the previous chapter, which problematised both textual and discursive policy. Indeed this chapter has highlighted in practical terms the (unintended) effects of the ritualised production of texts, as well as 'the power relations that a discourse constructs and allows' (Ball 1993: 14). From the delayed request to address the root causes of cross-border conflict, to uncritically advocating engagement with regional organisations, it firstly demonstrates the slow-moving, repetitive nature of mandates as they are couched in Security Council Resolutions, even in the face of evidence of the need for the contrary. Secondly, the programmes flowing from the mandates demonstrate limited engagement with ex-combatant narratives and preferences, especially in relation to practical economic empowerment options, whether local livelihoods or DDR, even though on-the-ground peacebuilding actors were well aware of the need for these.

Finally, the reasons for these limitations are related to the habitual practices of the UN and its staff, and reliance on pro forma approaches, facilitated by planning and reporting processes that do not engender excessive self-reflection or critique. A case in point is the cross-border DDR situation. The UNMIL DDR policy paper referenced above was adapted into a code cable, setting out the limitations and parameters of UNMIL support, and sent to New York. The mandate notwithstanding, from then onwards the mission referenced this instead of the mandate in relation to our proposed engagement, which eventually came to nought, a potentially missed opportunity, given both Liberian and Ivoirian militias' expectations that they would be able to benefit from DDR.

It should be noted that the preceding is not an exhaustive account or critique of UN and sub-regional organisations' efforts on the ground, but rather an analysis of how framing and resulting practice based on the mandates and narrow engagement with ex-combatants' and local communities' narratives limited the nature and impact of the resulting peacebuilding interventions. It should also be read with the caveat that despite these limitations, over time the frequency and severity of cross-border attacks eased significantly in part, no doubt, to the efforts discussed above, among others.

These limitations also should be considered in a context where resolutions contain not just the mandates for the relevant peace operation but also directives to the national government, other UN agencies and stakeholders, which all have their own mandates, priorities and capacity constraints. The next chapter considers state-led efforts to address cross-border stabilisation, highlighting for the most part that the limitations discussed above were not limited to international peacebuilding initiatives, as state-led approaches were subject to similar pitfalls and constraints.

10. Partial engagement in practice: national responses to border insecurity

This chapter considers the effectiveness of national peacebuilding responses to regional conflict, albeit with the support of the UN missions, in relation to the motivations articulated in Chapters 6 and 7. In doing so it critically considers Autesserre's assertion that 'peacebuilding is more effective when it promotes both local authorship ... and local ownership' (2014: 102). As such, it interrogates Autesserre's supposition that local perspectives and initiatives are the missing link in successful peacebuilding practice. Quoting Moore (2013: 121), she notes that local authorship relates to the constant solicitation of 'local input on how to best proceed with a given set of goals', while local ownership entails 'control over policy creation and implementation.'

As with previous chapters, this chapter is informed by regional peacebuilding activities from 2002 onwards, but largely focuses on Liberian and Ivorian government activities in response to the Ivorian post-electoral crisis, and subsequent cross-border and near-border attacks from 2010 to 2016. According to the Panel of Experts for Liberia,

The attackers constitute a network of Liberian mercenaries and Ivorian militia members who operate as ethnically affiliated and aligned 'gangs', which have access, sometimes competing access, to various financial supporters in neighbouring countries. The fact that networks inside Liberia lack hierarchical structure could be symptomatic of a lack of coordination at the strategic level, such as among former Gbagbo financiers living in Ghana. The availability of military assault rifles and limited quantities of heavier weapons such as rocket-propelled grenades shows that financing provides the critical catalyst for the incitement of cross-border attacks ... Liberian mercenaries remain ready for mobilization, primarily for personal enrichment, as do former Ivorian militia members, who live in refugee camps or in local communities and have limited means to participate in the informal economy. Liberian mercenaries fulfil a coordination and logistical role, while combatant manpower is derived predominantly from former Ivorian militia members. Accordingly, Liberian mercenaries and Ivorian militia commanders, who fought together in Côte d'Ivoire, jointly command the combatants. (Panel of Experts on Liberia 2012a)

Although apparently dwelling on the 'mercenary' motive, this paragraph in reality demonstrates the complex intermingling of motivations, mentioning at the same time, the kinship motive (operating as 'ethnically affiliated and aligned "gangs"'); micro-

regional factors (living together ‘in refugee camps or in local communities and have limited means to participate in the informal economy’, funded by state-in-exile ‘financial supporters in neighbouring countries’); and associational motivations (‘Liberian mercenaries and Ivorian militia commanders, who fought together in Côte d’Ivoire’).

In response to this complexity of motivations, the Liberian and Ivoirian governments stepped up their bilateral engagement to address cross-border insecurity and promote stabilization. Given the presence of the two UN missions in both countries and their mandates to provide support to the two governments for border stabilisation, this quickly evolved into a quadripartite arrangement, involving the two governments, UNMIL and UNOCI, such that, apart from a bilateral security meeting in May 2012, nearly all subsequent border security meetings were held in a quadripartite context. Between 2012 and 2016, there were three major quadripartite meetings, in June 2012, April 2013 and March 2015, each of which took place following attacks close to the Liberian–Ivoirian border, some with a cross-border dimension⁶⁴ (also represented in Table A1.2 in Annex 1), and led to borders between the two countries being closed for a time. Critiqued for their largely reactive nature, especially coming as they did following alleged cross-border attacks, the meetings were each punctuated by communiqués which included, among other matters, agreements on measures to bring Liberian and Ivoirian cross-border fighters to justice, joint security operations, and cross-border cooperation and dialogue. This sections below discuss the various efforts in each of these areas by the Liberian and Ivoirian governments, including why the efforts took the forms that they did and the limitations in each case.

⁶⁴ It is worthwhile noting that the Panel of Experts on Liberia (2013b) related the motivations for later attacks to combatants’ efforts to demonstrate to funders (mostly state-in-exile pro-Gbagbo supporters based in Ghana as discussed in Chapter 7) of their ongoing capability to destabilise the border region and attract further funding, which had dried up due to misappropriation of previous funds provided, and the arrest and extradition from Ghana of some of these funders.

10.1. *Bringing cross-border fighters to justice*

A major feature of both countries' efforts was coordination to bring cross-border fighters to justice. This included internment, detention, extradition, and, in the case of Liberian cross-border combatants, a 'mercenary trial'.

10.1.1. Internment of suspected Ivoirian militias

As mentioned in the previous chapter, it was widely perceived that Ivoirian militias were among the refugee influx to Liberia following the electoral crisis. In situations where the population influx seeking asylum is considered mixed, the screening, separation and internment of suspected armed elements in accordance with international law is an important strategy for ensuring UNHCR principles of maintaining the civilian character of refugee camps (UNHCR 2006a, 2006b). Prior to the 2010 Ivoirian elections, during contingency planning, UNMIL and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) 'raised the possibility of a "mixed influx", and the need to consider an internment policy for any armed elements entering into the country among other asylum seekers, in accordance with international law and in order to protect civilian host and refugee populations in the neutral State, and to prevent armed elements using neutral territory to regroup, recruit or rearm with the intention of returning to the theatre of conflict' (United Nations Mission in Liberia 2012: 1).

In March 2011, following sustained advocacy by ICRC and UNMIL, stakeholders agreed to establish an Integrated Task Force (ITF) to consider administrative detention for foreign armed elements, in line with international protocols. Definitive action was precipitated by the detention of 88 suspected armed elements by the Liberia National Police (LNP) on 1 April 2011 for illegal possession of ammunition, following their entry into Maryland County, Liberia from Côte d'Ivoire. In the absence of an internment facility, they were detained at the central prison in Harper, Maryland's County Capital but in May 2011, the Harper Circuit Court ruled that they were being held unlawfully as they had not been charged, and that they should be released to a 'habitable encampment site in a secured environment' (Panel of Experts on Liberia 2011: 17).

Responsibility for this fell to the ITF, led by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and including the National Security Agency, relevant line Ministries (including Justice, Defence, Agriculture and Health and Social Welfare), the LNP, BIN, State Security, and the Liberian Refugee, Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC), with UNMIL and UNHCR advising (United Nations Mission in Liberia 2012a). A site was identified in Weinsue, Bong County, inland from the Ivoirian border, to which the suspected armed elements were transferred in June 2011.

Rescreening determined that 16 of the internees were minors, 53 were armed elements, 16 were adult civilians and three were Liberian mercenaries (United Nations Mission in Liberia 2012a). The Liberian Government subsequently informed internees of their various options, contingent of their renunciation of armed activities: voluntary repatriation to Côte d'Ivoire; submission for Refugee Status Determination; seek asylum; or ECOWAS residency. In December 2011 the ITF recommended the closure of Weinsue by mid-March 2012. According to the Liberian Government, this was because the conditions for administrative detention were no longer necessary, given that the situation in Côte d'Ivoire had stabilised and rescreening by the Joint Security apparatus determined that the majority had renounced armed activity, and on 12 March 2012, all the remaining internees were moved from Weinsue and the camp was closed.⁶⁵ Sixty-nine of them were granted refugee status and transferred to reception centres. Following a request from the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, three were brought before the Gbarnga Magisterial Court on the basis of warrants issued the same day, and detained in Gbarnga Prison although subsequently released in April 2012 (Panel of Experts on Liberia 2012b).

While officially the Liberian Government concluded that the changing situation precluded the need for administrative detention, the Panel of Experts for Liberia note in their June 2012 report that the Ministry of Internal Affairs cited 'lack of funds to maintain the camp' (Panel of Experts on Liberia 2012b: 17) as the reason for its premature closure. Furthermore, the overall issue of administrative detention was

⁶⁵ Interview with LRRRC official, March 2012.

never institutionalised to respond to the mixed influx and threat to national security posed by suspected armed elements, and no further action was taken to identify other suspected armed elements for possible internment, whether in Weinsue or elsewhere, even though it was clear that militias continued to arrive in Liberia, as mentioned in Chapter 7.

Despite this intelligence, Weinsue was the beginning and end of the Liberian government's experiment with internment. That very few lessons had been learned from Weinsue was patently obvious during a contingency planning exercise for the Ivoirian presidential elections in October 2015. The only reference information available was from a lessons learnt document compiled by UNMIL in 2012. Although the Ministry of Internal Affairs had been the lead in the ITF, it had no available information or institutional memory about the activity or knowledge of best practice, with no staff who had worked on the ITF still in position, and the technical inputs for the plan were based largely on information provided by UNMIL.

10.1.2. Detention and prosecution of Liberian and Ivoirian cross-border fighters

The Panel of Experts (2012a) reported that between June and October 2012, 25 individuals were detained, almost all of them in Grand Gedeh county, on suspicion of being involved in cross-border fighting. Their arrests seemed to be based on limited intelligence available to security agencies as well as joint security operations initiated in June 2012 (see section 10.2 below). The Liberians were mostly arrested in the proximity of refugee and gold mining camps, as well as towns close to the Ivoirian border. Some of them were found to be in possession of ammunition and sophisticated equipment, such as satellite phones, including items allegedly taken from the UNOCI peacekeepers killed in the June 2012 cross-border attack. Some were subsequently released, with the Panel believing that at least two continued to plan cross-border attacks. Others remained in custody, however, and were subsequently charged with mercenarism, murder, rape, arson, illegal possession of firearms and theft of property. Still others were charged with criminal facilitation and paramilitary activities and transferred to Monrovia, where they remained in pre-trial detention for

nearly two years, until the trial of 19 of them commenced together on 15 July 2013 (see below). It should be noted, however, that this trial was the only one of its kind to take place. As such, while the arrests should have deterred cross-border attacks, the frequent release of those arrested made a mockery of the process.

During this period, the Liberian Security Joint Taskforce (JTF) also picked up Ivoirians suspected of participating in cross-border attacks. On 24 August 2012, six of them were charged with 'murder, mercenarism, rape, arson, illegal possession of firearms and theft of property' (Panel of Experts on Liberia 2012a: 12). While some were also remanded in custody, others were extradited to Côte d'Ivoire. Indeed, extradition has been Côte d'Ivoire's preferred method for dealing with the Ivoirian militias but this has raised significant protection concerns about due process and the fate of these militias once handed over to the Ivoirian government. For instance, on 23 June 2012, 41 Ivoirians suspected of carrying out activities against integrity and security in Côte d'Ivoire were extradited from Liberia to Côte d'Ivoire. Upon arrival in Côte d'Ivoire, they were all detained at the police headquarters in Abidjan before being transferred to various prisons across the country. In that connection, six were transferred to Abidjan and charged with participation in the attack that resulted in the death of seven UNOCI peacekeepers on 8 June 2012. The remaining 35 were transferred to four other prisons around the country, and charged various crimes, including genocide, murder, assault, aggravated rape, and crimes against humanity (source: UNOCI anecdotal reporting).

The reliance of both governments on extradition of suspected Ivoirian armed elements has had adverse implications for international humanitarian principles, such as *non-refoulement*. For instance, on 12 February 2014 several media outlets reported that between five and 18 Ivoirians, as well as some Liberians, had been arrested in River Gee County trying to cross into Côte d'Ivoire (Parley 2014). It was subsequently confirmed that 26 individuals (including five Liberians) had been arrested between 7 and 14 February and variously charged with loitering, mercenarism, terrorism and criminal facilitation. Of these 19, all holding refugee status, were repatriated to Côte d'Ivoire and placed under arrest, in direct violation of the principle of *non-refoulement*.

Even in cases where they may not have been refugees, extradition of suspects by the Liberian Government (for instance, of the 41 Ivoirians suspected of cross-border military activity) has been a contentious practice, as human rights practitioners have expressed concern about the fate awaiting those individuals extradited to Côte d'Ivoire. Further, as discussed in Chapter 7, Ivoirian refugees in Liberia have consistently pointed to the ongoing detention of pro-Gbagbo supporters as one of the main reasons that they fear returning to Côte d'Ivoire, citing it as evidence of the Ivoirian Government's lack of commitment towards reconciliation. The Liberian Government's willingness to hand over Ivoirian suspects to the Ivoirian authorities is also seen by Liberian border communities as evidence of the Liberian Government's pro-Ouattara (and therefore anti-Gbagbo, anti-Krahn, anti-Kru) stance.

As discussed in the previous chapter, despite calls from various fronts UNHCR did not consider it necessary to undertake comprehensive rescreening to ensure ex-combatants who had not renounced military activity were separated from the civilian refugee population. Yet as recently as September 2015 the Liberian government briefly detained three refugees in Little Wlebo Camp, Maryland County, following reports they were involved in mercenary recruitment or organising armed elements. Nor did they permit information on DDR opportunities to be communicated within the camp, a potentially short-sighted approach that may have had adverse implications for returning ex-combatant refugees who would not have been able to take advantage of the comparatively lucrative reintegration packages other than that accorded by their refugee status (especially following the formal closure of the Ivoirian DDR programme).

According to the Panel of Experts on Liberia, the Ivoirian Government has also engaged in paying off commanders to stop them from organising attacks. While this seemed to have paid off in the short run it is not a long-term solution, especially if others are ready to pay more or underlying grievances remain unresolved.

10.1.3. The mercenary trial

As mentioned above, the trial of 19 Liberians commenced on 15 July 2013, after some of the defendants had been in pre-trial detention for over two years. The defendants were soon reduced to 18 as one, Prince Barclay, turned state's witness, following which charges against him were dropped. In making their case, the prosecution relied on the testimony of 'insider' witnesses, who provided evidence that they were present at the time of the attack in Para in 2012 during which the seven UNOCI peacekeepers were killed.

On the stand, the accused uniformly denied being involved in cross-border activities and claimed that they had been offered money and to have their charges dropped if they testified against their fellow accused. Most denied knowing one another and pointed to a range of legal activities they were engaged in to make a living. They also complained that excessive force had been used during their arrests and while they were in custody, with two claiming that a fellow suspect had been beaten to death. They also claimed that the Emergency Response Unit officers who had arrested them had taken their gold, money and jewellery, and that the theft of these items was the main motive for their arrest. They further claimed that they had been asked to provide bribes to secure their release, which they claimed another suspect, 'Bob Marley', had done. Central to the defendants' testimonies was the assertion that they did not make the statements accredited to them by the prosecution which, they alleged, were in any case obtained illegally as they did not have lawyers present; they further argued that the prosecution's case was in substance based on hearsay evidence (information based on court transcripts, newspaper articles, and UNMIL summary of court proceedings). The defence also tried to show that key States witnesses had been manipulated into providing false testimony, in exchange for money that in the end was not forthcoming.

I had the opportunity to attend a court session in September 2013. I was barely able to follow proceedings as the witness's responses were hardly heard beyond the stand and every few minutes the judge had to stop proceedings in order to paraphrase the witness's testimony to the court clerk for recording. On the day I attended, a female officer was on the stand, called as a witness by the prosecution to attest to the fact

that she was not in a love triangle with one of the accused and one of the witnesses which, the defence had proposed, was the reason why the witness had provided testimony against the accused. I relate this account because it brought home to me how much of a spectacle, bordering on farce, that the trial seemed to have become. This was taken to another level when the trial was suspended in September 2013, after state prosecutors accused one of the jurors of misconduct, claiming that he had committed perjury by lying about his real name, which was subsequently found out to be Krahn – which, as explained in Chapter 7, was the same ethnic group as most the accused. On 31 December 2013, a few days after the trial resumed, the presiding Judge was compelled to suspend the case after the defendants vandalised the court, with some stripping naked to protest their ongoing incarceration, their nakedness subsequently reproduced in several of the following days' newspapers. The re-trial eventually recommenced on 11 March 2014. At this time the original indictment was separated into two, wherein some of the defendants were alleged to have been part of the cross-border attacks into Côte d'Ivoire in 2011 and others alleged to have been involved in the attack of 2012 during which the UNOCI peacekeepers were killed.

On 9 May 2014, the Court acquitted five of the 18 defendants charged under the 2011 indictment, based on a motion for acquittal filed by the defence. On 10 June, the prosecution and the defence presented their final arguments. In main, the defence contended that the accused were not arrested in Côte d'Ivoire, where the crimes were alleged to have occurred, nor had there been any official testimony from the Ivorian government related to the charge. Further, the defence noted that the prosecution's arguments were solely based on hearsay evidence and should accordingly be ignored by the jury, and also the evidence produced by the 'insider' witnesses was uncorroborated (UNMIL reporting). Notwithstanding, the jury returned a 'guilty' verdict of against all remaining 13 defendants on the same day. The defence subsequently filed a motion for retrial, arguing that the weight of the evidence did not support the verdict; that the prosecution's evidence was substantially hearsay; and that statements of the accused were obtained illegally. Subsequently, the lawyers representing the 13 defendants also raised concerns that the jurors had been bribed US\$500 each to hand down a guilty verdict. The judge dismissed their motions on the

grounds that none of the arguments met the legal requirements for retrial. The judge confirmed the 'guilty' verdict against all 13 defendants, two charged under the 2011 indictment and 11 under the 2012 indictment, and the Court sentenced the defendants to life imprisonment to be served at Monrovia Central Prison.

Throughout the trial and subsequently, pressure groups criticised the entire process, especially as 12 of the 13 convicted were from Grand Gedeh. As discussed in Chapter 7, the trial was seen as a direct attack on Grand Gedehans. Numerous newspaper articles reported on this aspect, with Grand Gedeh lawmakers, diaspora, politicians and other citizens weighing in (Parley 2013). The Grand Gedeh Association in the Americas (GGAA) issued a statement expressing dismay over the conviction of the 12 Grand Gedehans, stating that the government had no credible evidence against the accused and that the guilty verdict was solely based on the fact that the convicts were Grand Gedehans. GGAA also claimed that they formed part of the government's efforts to discriminate against, marginalise and harass citizens of Grand Gedeh as a form of punishment for past occurrences and affiliation with former President Samuel Doe, and demanded that the Government stop prejudicial actions against them. One GGAA member noted, '[i]f Sirleaf is serious about justice, I challenge her to create an independent war crimes court so that everyone would have an opportunity to litigate their innocence or guilt. But witch-hunting Grand Gedeh citizens will not engender peace, reconciliation, and justice in Liberia, but disunity and mistrust' (Karmo 2013). Following the sentencing, Representative Munah Pelham Youngblood (Montserrado County) stated that the conviction was evidence of victimisation of the Grand Gedehans by the Government, observing, '[i]t pains me to see people from one ethnic group sentenced to life time imprisonment when we have just ended fourteen years of senseless war that divided us as people' (Morris 2014). As discussed in Chapter 7, together with other grievances, the trial consolidated Grand Gedeh positions against both the Liberian and Ivoirian governments, feeding into (or justifying further) cross-border combatant and border communities' perceptions of unfair prosecution.

Postscript to the trial: on 22 September 2016, the Supreme Court upheld the guilty verdict and life sentence of nine of the 13 convicts, reversing the guilty verdict of the

remaining four due to insufficient evidence. The decision has been met with disappointment in Grand Gedeh, with media continuing to report efforts by Grand Gedean lawmakers and officials to have the remaining released. According to a newspaper article on 25 October, the lead counsel was ‘rallying elders and chiefs of [Grand Gedeh] county to mobilize their people to beg President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to grant them clemency’ (Davis 2016). Recalling the language of an excluded citizenry, during the same meeting, senior Grand Gedeh politicians reportedly ‘assured that they would do everything possible to mobilize their people to beg President Sirleaf to free their children.’⁶⁶

Relating the situation to the government’s relationship with Côte d’Ivoire, the same article reports the defence counsel as saying, ‘Our government was only trying to show Côte d’Ivoire that they would compel its citizens to account for the crime they committed in that country, and they proved their case.’ A September 2016 newspaper article had also reported that one of the government prosecution lawyers had been fined US\$500 for ‘telling jurors hearing the mercenary case that if they acquitted the 13 defendants (Grand Gedeans), Ivory Coast would declare war on Liberia’ (Kollie 2016).

10.2. *Joint security operations*

As was mentioned above, some of the defendants in the mercenary trial were arrested by a Joint Task Force (JTF) during dedicated security operations to secure the Liberian border. This was part of an operation dubbed ‘Operation Restore Hope’, which the Liberian Government initiated on 20 June 2012, following the attacks in which the peacekeepers were killed. The JTF comprised the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), the LNP’s Emergency Response Unit (ERU), BIN, and the National Security Agency (NSA) who were deployed to three of the four Liberian counties bordering Côte d’Ivoire (Grand Gedeh, River Gee and Maryland), to mitigate the threats posed by armed

⁶⁶ The efforts seemed to have worked as on 30 December 2016 President Sirleaf granted clemency to four of the Grand Gedeans convicted of mercenarism.

elements by conducting search operations and targeting suspected individuals for arrest (Panel of Experts on Liberia 2012a). In support of the JTF, UNMIL increased the number of air-inserted foot patrols, and air reconnaissance patrols, including by MI-24 attack helicopters were also increased.

During the operation at least 29 individuals were arrested for allegedly carrying out mercenary and militia recruitment, cross-border attacks and arms embargo violations (Panel of Experts on Liberia 2012a). Further, several caches of arms were discovered including a haul in July 2012 that 'included five RPG rockets, 437 rounds of ammunition for automatic weapons, 41 empty AK47 magazines, two empty pistol magazines, 331 AK 47 rounds and four RPG busters' (United Nations Mission in Liberia 2012b). The Panel of Experts for Liberia noted, however, that while 'Operation Restore Hope . . . provided a counterbalance to the unrestricted mobilization of mercenaries and militia members, and incapacitated one network through the arrest of its leaders . . . other networks remain active and maintain adequate manpower and access to weapons' (Panel of Experts on Liberia 2012a).

In an effort to consolidate the modest gains from the joint operations, a border security meeting between Liberian and Ivoirian security agencies was held in Abidjan from 21–23 November 2012 to agree on a framework for the conduct of an intensive 10-day patrol from December 2012 to January 2013 to be Phase II of Operation Restore Hope on the Liberian side. It was further agreed that both sides should commence a joint riverine patrol along the Cavalla River as part of Phase III in order to prevent insurgence activities. During these operations, however, the media reported that morale among Liberian security personnel was low, especially as they lacked logistics and essential supplies. Further, although they were promised a special allowance during their deployment this was late or not forthcoming.

Following the quadripartite meeting in April 2013, AFL and FRCI held a further joint planning exercise in September 2013 to plan for future joint operations, which would have constituted an 'Operation Restore Hope III' on the Liberia side. I attended this meeting and the difference in approaches between the two forces was evident. This

was embodied in an extended discussion about a joint communiqué summarising the meeting's outcomes, in which Côte d'Ivoire wanted to refer to both security *and* defence, while Liberia insisted that they were only interested in security, as defence implied armed militias while they thought they were dealing with criminal elements. Despite the agreement to undertake joint operations this never materialised, most likely because of lack of funding and a perceived lack of immediate threat, unlike in 2011 and 2012. Another element of this has been Côte d'Ivoire's insistence on the principle of hot pursuit at quadripartite meetings, and again at the second JCEM (where it was not discussed but ended up on the communiqué), which would enable Ivoirian security personnel to pursue suspected armed or criminal elements into Liberian territory.

In March 2016 I attended the third quadripartite forces meeting, hosted by UNOCI in Grand Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire. While only the AFL was initially invited, UNMIL successfully advocated for the inclusion of LNP and BIN who are frontline responsible for border security (although the BIN subsequently did not attend). During the March 2016 meeting, UNMIL flew the Liberian participants to Côte d'Ivoire and subsequently supported the development of an operational planning guidance between the two countries by hosting video teleconferences. Post-meeting, engagement has been heavily facilitated by UNMIL and UNOCI, but even so, progress stalled, particularly on the Liberian side, reportedly due to financial constraints to ultimately undertake any exercise, and the extent to which engagement could continue in the absence of the missions is uncertain.

The engagement between the two countries' security forces highlights a range of constraints. The whole exercise has made it clear that bilateral engagement on border security is hampered by differential focus, organisational responsibility, and limited capacity and resources, among others. For instance, despite repeated efforts it has been close to impossible to make FRCI (now FACI)⁶⁷ understand that the principal responsibility for border security in Liberia rests with BIN (now LIS) rather than the AFL

⁶⁷ In 2016 FRCI was renamed *Forces armées de Côte d'Ivoire* (Armed Forces of Côte d'Ivoire, FACI).

who, as already noted, are not permanently at the border and even if they are would only serve as a third tier response on request of other security agencies. Yet BIN officers in 2016 were not armed, like much of the police (except for the ERU). This lack of permanent AFL presence at the border (although in 2016 they were deployed in Grand Gedeh but with limited scope) has meant that border security operations have been severely constrained. This contrasts with the Ivoirian side where FRCI is deployed semi-permanently, although this has not prevented them from being the target of periodic attacks, as mentioned above.

10.3. Strengthening cross-border cooperation and dialogue: Joint Council of Chiefs and Elders Meeting

As agreed in the June 2012 and April 2013 quadripartite meetings, the Governments of Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire collaborated to hold the first Joint Council of Chiefs and Elders meeting (JCCEM) in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County from 16 to 19 October 2013. The meeting aimed 'to contribute to the strengthening of cooperation, collaboration and coordination for, amongst other things, coherence of information exchanges between civilian and security authorities in the border regions of the two countries; enhance peacebuilding and stabilization in the region; and establish a platform for continual common border dialogue amongst the chiefs of both countries' borders as well as sustain the peace in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire' (Government of Liberia 2013: 4). It was to be 'the first of regular cross-border meetings aimed at information-sharing and awareness raising on potential threats to continued peace and stability and thereby regularly alerting appropriate authorities on early warning issues with implications for insecurity and violence', especially given trans-border ethnic affiliations which were also 'cause for concern' (Government of Liberia 2013: 4).

The primary participants of the first meeting were upwards of 150 community representatives, which included traditional chiefs, women's, youth group and refugee leaders, County Superintendents (Liberia) and Prefects (Côte d'Ivoire) from Nimba, Grand Gedeh, River Gee and Maryland Counties on the Liberian side and Dix-huit montagnes, Moyen Cavally and Bas Sassandra regions on the Ivoirian side. The idea

recognised the importance of involving traditional leaders in ensuring peace and security, and especially of utilising the much dwelled-upon cross-border ethnic affiliations as a means of promoting cross-border stabilisation. As much as the meeting was to give an opportunity to people from both sides of the border to talk to each other, it was also supposed to be a confidence-building exercise by the government among populations traditionally considered hostile towards the government. The decision to hold the first meeting in Zwedru in this context could also have been considered a welcome counterpoint to the accusations that the government was bent on sidelining the Krahn/Grand Gedehs. The profile of the meeting was raised by the decision of the two countries' heads of state to participate in the closing ceremony.

Although the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) was in the lead, the meeting was largely made possible by the interventions of UNMIL and UNOCI, who had committed to supporting it. Representatives, including myself, participated in regular planning and technical meetings, contributing to decisions as varied as the participants (including insisting on the participation of women and youth representatives from each county, not just elders) and facilitating joint visits of technical teams from both countries to Zwedru to assess the venue, delegates' accommodation, travel arrangements (including flights), and so on. Within a month of the meeting, various UNMIL sections responsible for logistics, security and other support services had to be brought into the process, following a request from MIA for support for a range of items, including security, roadworks and aviation travel.

While a useful initiative in principle and even in practice, there were numerous problems associated with the planning and execution of the event. Firstly, the dates were not fixed until September, which meant a lot of planning did not happen until the last minute, and it was clear that Zwedru, despite being the capital of Grand Gedeh, was woefully inadequate for holding such a major event (reference the complaints made by Grand Gedeh elders in Chapter 7 regarding holding Independence Day celebrations there). In Liberia, the technical committee relied heavily on UNMIL both in Monrovia and Zwedru for a range of activities, including drafting the concept and the programme; logistical arrangements (including transporting water, chairs), for de-

conflicting flights, etc. Notwithstanding, UNMIL and UNOCI differed on the level and type of support they should provide, with UNOCI eventually flying in by air the chiefs and delegates, although it had originally been anticipated that they would come by road. This highlighted the issue raised in the previous chapter regarding difficulties in inter-mission cooperation resulting from differential relationships with host governments and different mission priorities, to which we might add differential capacities, expectations and priorities of host governments themselves.

Overall the event itself was overshadowed by the decision by the two heads of state to participate in the closing ceremony such that most of the joint planning became about the protocols, security, and ceremony of the final day, at the expense of utilising the event to develop meaningful exchange between neighbouring communities. The meeting itself was also less useful than it could have been. The facilitators were highly educated, eloquent individuals, who despite their best efforts could not speak at the level of the participants. The first day involved a series of lofty PowerPoint presentations by Liberian and Ivoirian government officials, with no opportunity for participants to interact with one another or engage meaningfully with the material. While subsequent focus group discussions were impassioned exchanges, which yielded a range of innovative suggestions (at least in my view), for instance proposals related to traditional forgiveness and reconciliation activities,⁶⁸ these were not reflected in the resulting communiqué, which was hashed out between Ivoirian and Liberian facilitators and experts and which constituted vague recommendations and suggestions, nothing close to what was initially envisioned in the original concept note.

Although the meeting was meant to be held annually, the next one was not held until January 2016, in Guiglo, Côte d'Ivoire. Heavy staff turnover meant that once again

⁶⁸ It was interesting that although fostering collaboration between communities and government authorities and addressing border insecurity were considered an important aspect of initiatives such as the JCEM, due to the predominance of kinship narratives, national and international peacebuilders did not really consider that the regional conflict had resulted in discord within kinship groupings, following the strain of years of reciprocal hosting of refugees, and persistent insecurity resulting from cross-border combatants' activities in the region, among others. Although these issues were raised vociferously in the different focus group discussions, they were not carried forward in the formal reporting (by national level counterparts) or the final communiqué.

there was very little in-house institutional memory at MIA, which had to rely heavily on UNMIL records and capacity, including to facilitate interactions with the Ivoirian technical committee. In many ways the second JCCEM replicated the first meeting, although the Ivoirian government, being more capacitated, had less involvement from UNOCI, but it was similarly rushed (notice of the meeting being given on 29 December 2015), with an even greater number of PowerPoint presentations, and again much of the focus on the pomp and ceremony of the heads of state's attendance. Tellingly, in focus group discussions, participants pointed to the lack of progress in addressing the issues raised at the first JCCEM more than two years previously. The resulting communiqué was slightly more robust than the first, with recommendations regarding refugee repatriation, regularised information exchange, improving cross-border livelihoods; strengthening bilateral cooperation; resolving land occupation issues; involving chiefs, elders, youth and women in cross-border peace and development initiatives; and strategies for youth livelihoods. Post-meeting, the Liberian MIA began to develop a project document based on these recommendations, and to solicit funds for their implementation. While the government-led initiative has not gained much traction to-date, UN agencies have seized hold of the communiqué and are using it as their point of reference for developing their own cross-border stabilisation programmes, discussed in the previous chapter.

While such meetings demonstrate some intent on the part of the two governments to find innovative ways to address cross-border insecurity, their focus on grand strokes and public declarations, with few tangible outcomes and even fewer follow-up activities, was a real bone of contention with JCCEM participants, who viewed it as yet another example of their governments appearing to make an effort to address their grievances, without really doing anything.

10.4. Conclusion

The chapter immediately preceding this one examined the limitations of international and sub-regional peacebuilding practice, while the one before that considered the ways in which peace operations' mandates are crafted, the considerations that inform

how they are translated on the ground, and the circular, potentially limiting logic that governs peace operations, especially when set against the motivations that have been elaborated in Chapters 6 and 7. Together with this chapter, they demonstrate that the responses of national, regional and international actors alike stem from the perception that regional fighters comprise a ‘threat’ and accordingly their responses are heavily militarised (e.g. increased border patrols; border closures) at the expense of societal security considerations such as integrated human security approaches and efforts to address the vulnerabilities that facilitate recruitment and that would support peaceful resettlement of refugees, and so on. Yet even the militarised responses tend to be retroactive and short-sighted, and efforts to plan in advance tend to remain on paper, only resuscitated when another alleged cross-border attack takes place. Invariably they are thus extremely limited in their scope and impact.

Another constraint relates to the fact that national level initiatives to address a micro-regional problem are subject to bilateral engagement. Yet, with regard to Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire, this engagement is extremely problematic, as it is mediated by different systems, perspectives, views, and concerns. This ranges from language constraints (English versus French), to different systems of security governance (for instance in Côte d’Ivoire the Interior Ministry is also responsible for security but this is not the case in Liberia; further border security is the purview of the military in Côte d’Ivoire but in Liberia, as mentioned above, responsibility rests with the BIN (now LIS), under the Ministry of Justice). Differing perceptions, and analysis of the nature of the problem (i.e. whether the posture should be defence or security) also hinders joint approaches. Côte d’Ivoire’s relatively stronger economic position also puts Liberia firmly in the role of junior partner.

With regard to the approaches that relate to prosecution, rather than demonstrating a reinforcement of rule of law and justice, they have done the exact opposite. On the Ivoirian side it appears that the individuals arrested and extradited have been perceived as political prisoners, held expressly for being pro-Gbagbo supporters, one of the reasons expressed by refugees for their reluctance to return. The mercenary trial in Liberia resulted in an entire ethnic population feeling vilified by the Johnson-

Sirleaf Government, alienating them even further, and entrenching their anti-Sirleaf / anti-Ouattara positions even more firmly.

Further, while there is increasing awareness of socio-cultural and socio-emotional imperatives, as evidenced by the JCEM, these translate into short-sighted and ill-informed programmes on the ground, with little follow-up in between, whether because of a lack of interest, finance or strategic direction. This has resulted, for instance, in a focus on elders and traditional authorities, instead of dynamic youth leadership, which might with more authority speak on behalf of ex-combatants, or even include them, and has largely ignored the need for 'youth empowerment' programmes that would meaningfully include vulnerable or at-risk young people most likely to engage in cross-border militant and criminal activity.

Finally, we conclude this chapter with a brief discussion on 'local' versus 'national' versus 'international'. Autesserre (2014: 25) notes that 'local authorities and populations regularly contest, adapt, and transform international programs, and ... the results of foreign efforts are a hybrid between the intentions of the expatriates and the interests of local stakeholders.' This chapter demonstrates that, similar to critiques about international peacebuilding practice, at the level of government, peacebuilding practice and effectiveness is hampered by low capacity and interest, an unwillingness to learn lessons from past experience, and an inability to adapt to developing situations. This is exacerbated by frequent reshuffling of government ministry and agency staff, limiting continuity and institutional memory. Additionally, the prevailing approaches demonstrate that existing staff are largely lacking understanding or analysis of the situation on the ground. This recalls Autesserre's critique of top-down approaches, wherein she argues that too often in policy discourse, national level concerns proxy for 'local' perspectives (Autesserre 2010: 43): as the first and second JCEMs showed, national level actors may be just as removed as international peacebuilders, if not more so, from local-level perspectives. It could be argued that the reasons for this stem partly from the cookie-cutter approach espoused by external peacebuilders supporting these processes, with limited input from frontline local authorities or even local communities. As Autesserre notes, the

structure of inequality in the international peacebuilding system generates power asymmetries between external interveners and local stakeholders, and shapes the perceptions of local people and the interveners' everyday actions on the ground (Autesserre 2014: 40). In a post-conflict context, especially where a peace operation is present, international perspectives are insidious at national and even local levels, especially where the mission presents a large sense of continuity, such that it can stifle or (even inadvertently) force national counterparts to absorb its perspective. Accordingly, local is not necessarily national ministry and agency staff and practitioners, who are most likely responsive to (and co-opted into) international peacebuilding practice. It may not even be local communities, who international and national peacebuilders have learnt to 'consult', often limited to picking preferences from a shopping list of activities, or participating in pro forma evaluation activities.

This chapter (and to some extent parts of the previous chapter that elucidate on the efforts of sub-regional organisations) highlights the potential tensions between formal regionalism and informal regionalisation processes that are a feature of the new regionalisms approach. In 2012, the Panel of Experts on Liberia concluded that '[t]he inability of the Government of Liberia to implement a comprehensive strategy on former combatants who escaped the Ivorian crisis means that certain individuals and groups will likely continue to be involved in cross-border security issues' (Panel of Experts on Liberia 2012b: 23). If peacebuilding, and indeed formal regionalism, practice is to be truly effective then the perspectives of the peacekept, including cross-border combatants who are, in regional conflict contexts, the most local and transnational of actors, is critical. This requires full engagement with their range of motivations, whether this means meaningful investment in marginal livelihoods to address economic incentives, or innovative empowerment of border communities to build on kinship narratives to promote social cohesion and reconciliation.

11. Discussion and conclusion

The central purpose of this thesis has been to address the following question: **Why were international peacebuilding efforts ineffective in addressing the phenomenon of regional combatants, which contributed to the spread of regional conflict in the Mano River Union sub-region of West Africa?** In doing so, it sought to enhance understanding of the factors that drive regional insecurity in West Africa, and the prospects for regional and international peacebuilding approaches to address them. It has done this through the lens of a new regionalisms approach, through which regional combatant motivations, and corresponding responses by the UN and associated peacekeeping and peacebuilding mechanisms were examined. It is informed by cross-border movements since the start of the Liberian conflict in 1989, while the analysis refers extensively to the cross-border movements of Liberians and Ivoirian fighters following the Ivoirian electoral crisis in 2010 and subsequent efforts by the UN to stabilise the common border between Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. This concluding chapter summarises the main findings from the preceding discussions. Section 11.1 revisits my framework, research questions and corresponding propositions, examining the extent to which the analysis concurred with these, and highlighting my contributions to the academic and research debates on regional peacebuilding. Section 11.2 elaborates on the policy implications for regional peacebuilding, while Section 11.3 highlights additional contributions to methodological approaches to international relations. Section 11.4 concludes with some final thoughts.

11.1. Analytical framework, research questions and propositions revisited

11.1.1. Combatant motivations

With sub-question 1 I wanted to investigate regional combatants' motivations for moving to fight in neighbouring countries' conflicts. Proposition 1 asserted that regional combatants subscribe to a range of inter-related motivations for participation in cross-border conflict, which I theorised is a function of these motivations. As demonstrated in Chapters 6 and 7, combatant and ex-combatant narratives are crafted

and change as these fighters change geographic locations, which provides renewed impetus for fighting. In keeping with the literature, my research finds that economic imperatives feature prominently in regional combatants' motivations. These must be considered beyond the common 'mercenary' tag, however. In the first place, I found that combatants themselves invoke the mercenary label as a form of posturing, an effort to make themselves and their cause somehow 'bigger and badder' and therefore to be taken more seriously than they might otherwise be. Secondly, the mercenary label obscures the critical material constraints that former fighters face, which relate to alternative livelihoods narratives. It is also important to note that the dominance of economic motivations notwithstanding, these are hardly ever cited in isolation and are in no way considered mutually exclusive or contradictory by ex-combatants themselves. As such, a key conclusion of this research is that while economic motivations are important, they cannot be simply reduced to the 'greed' or 'mercenary' narrative.

Indeed, ex-combatants have constructed a range of narratives beyond material to explain (or justify) their reasons for moving to fight, which are not commonly represented in the literature. These include 'missionary' imperatives (professional soldier on a mission) and improving one's fortunes (adventurer). These narratives speak respectively to combatants' desire to be seen as potentially productive members of society, and to the modernising effects of conflict. Utas noted that in Liberia, the war created alternative power structures, and participation in it provided children and youths with 'unprecedented access to power and the trappings of modernity' (Utas 2003: 116), which were reversed by the end of the conflict, creating a 'bedrock of dissatisfaction' (ibid.:42). Seeking opportunities in other contexts could therefore be read as an effort to return to this modernising trend.

Two other narratives, which could be termed 'relational', also require critical engagement. Firstly, kinship ties (identity narratives) are increasingly referenced in the literature, reinforced both by combatants and the communities within which they live, and targeted by peacebuilding practice, for instance through social cohesion programmes and events. Inasmuch as these are undoubtedly a factor, as shown in Chapters 6 and 7, the appeal to socio-cultural motivations is also a deliberate strategy,

facilitated by wider community perceptions of ongoing marginalisation and exclusion, which provides both a rallying narrative and justification for remobilisation. The thesis has accordingly demonstrated that how combatants mobilise cross-border communitarian narratives, and to what effect, should also be an important consideration for regional peacebuilding practice.

Additionally, social network motivations (or 'brothers-in-arms' narratives) also help to underscore the perpetuation of chains of command and combatant association, which such programmes as disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) endeavour to sever, and bring to the forefront questions about how and why such networks persist and can be quickly reactivated several years after the end of domestic conflict. Attribution to existential reasons, though by only a few combatants, further points to the unfinished business of psycho-social healing in post-conflict societies, also an indication of the inadequacy of DDR programmes.

Whatever the motivations, the preceding discussion also serves to demonstrate that combatants do exercise agency in their decisions to participate in cross-border combat, and through this agency display the capacity to respond to opportunities arising in conflict and post-conflict contexts. While peacebuilders on the ground have largely recognised this agency, as the next sub-section discusses, peacebuilding practice remains constrained from providing an adequate response.

11.1.2. Everyday peacebuilding in practice

Sub-question 2 examined the extent to which on-the-ground peacebuilders were able to take into consideration the range of combatant motivations that drive regional and cross-border conflict in their response strategies. As discussed in Chapter 8, peacebuilding practice is constrained from top to bottom, an outcome arising from the ritualised production of text and policies, involving the interplay between 'Headquarters' and 'the Field' and mediated by unequal power dynamics that privilege some discourses while silencing others. As noted above, Chapters 6 and 7 demonstrated that ex-combatants and their communities ascribe their actions, sometimes simultaneously, to a range of motivations. Yet, Chapter 8 showed that, through mutually reinforcing policy texts and discourses, embodied first and foremost

in Security Council resolution mandates, built on or avoided in results-based budgeting processes, regular reporting, strategic reviews, assessment missions and the like, the UN, together with other international and regional peacebuilding institutions, continues to centre its responses on a narrow set of imperatives that are difficult to adjust, at the expense of more potentially relevant foci. Chapter 8 thus concurred with Autesserre's (2014) conclusion that the exclusionary creation of dominant peacebuilding narratives can obscure critical context-specific nuances and can enable and justify (even problematic) practices (Autesserre 2014: 34). In a departure from Autesserre, however, rather than attributing this to peacebuilders not prioritising 'intimate understanding of local histories, cultures, or language' (Autesserre 2014: 33), I have argued that the creation of dominant peacebuilding narratives may be attributed to the institutional and discursive constraints stemming from peace operations' structures and peacebuilding practices.

The implications of this narrow set of institutional imperatives were explored through Sub-question 3, which questioned the extent to which the resulting strategies implemented by peacebuilders have been effective in promoting and sustaining regional peace. As submitted by Proposition 3, Chapters 9 and 10 discuss how this range of constraints has translated into inadequate responses on the ground both by international and national peacebuilders. Chapter 9 demonstrated that international and regional institutions involved in West African peacebuilding recognise the reality of myriad motivations of cross-border combatants but, like the prevailing literature, they concentrate on selective incentives, and almost exclusively tend to label cross-border combatant activities as 'mercenary'. As such, their responses stem from the perception that regional fighters comprise a 'threat' and accordingly their responses are heavily securitised (e.g. increased border patrols, border closures) at the expense of integrated human security approaches and efforts to address the vulnerabilities that facilitate the creation of marginalised identities and subsequent (re-)recruitment. And even these securitised responses tend to be reactive, including (or especially) at national level, as demonstrated in Chapter 10.

Further, while peacebuilders demonstrate an increasing awareness of socio-cultural and socio-emotional imperatives, these translate into short-sighted and ill-informed

programmes on the ground. This stems partly from the cookie-cutter approach applied to peacebuilding. This has resulted, for instance, in a focus on elders and traditional authorities, instead of dynamic youth leadership, or in the implementation of 'youth empowerment' programmes that exclude the majority of vulnerable or at-risk young people most likely to engage in cross-border militant and criminal activity. Conversely, despite an evidenced need other programmes, such as cross-border DDR, do not get off the ground.

11.1.3. Insights from the new regionalisms approach

As noted in previous chapters, micro-regions are the nexus of marginalised identities that straddle both sides of a given border, also characterised by cross-border kinship, poorly patrolled borders, and ungoverned and ungovernable populations. The new regionalisms approach (NRA) enables us to take these complexities into consideration when considering regional peace and security, particularly facilitating a focus on non-state actors, such as regional combatants, and analysis of their impacts on institution-led processes.

The Secretary-General's 2015 Report on the HIPPO report observed:

Peace operations offer a unique platform to draw together a wide range of United Nations capacities, serve as catalysts for bilateral and non-governmental attention and facilitate actions by United Nations and non-United Nations partners. This may be their greatest potential to address today's complex crises, but we are failing to fully realize it. One reason is our well-meaning attempt to neatly characterize conflicts and develop specific tools for each. However, conflicts rarely comply with categories. Violence erupts and subsides, stalemates persist for years, and lapses and relapses occur. Rebel groups may use terrorist tactics; national forces may prey on the populations that they exist to protect. An effective peace operation must be able to look ahead and constantly adjust its response using all United Nations instruments. **Similarly, we continue to frame mission mandates and postures in national terms, when the transnational nature of today's conflicts threatens entire regions. Transforming peace operations into instruments that can address the regional dimensions of conflict requires a change in mindset across the Organization.** (General Assembly, Security Council 2015: 6, emphasis mine)

This perspective seemingly draws welcomingly closer to a new regionalisms approach but as this thesis has shown, the reality in UN peace operations remains a long way off, with Chapter 8 particularly discussing the shortcomings of attempts to 'neatly characterize conflicts', while Chapters 9 and 10 discussed the impacts of these

shortcomings on the ground especially in relation to regional peacebuilding policies and practice. This thesis has aimed to provide a way to think about the application of NRA in the regional peacebuilding context, by demonstrating how failure to adequately interpret and act on the motives behind the cross-border movements of combatants contributes to limited success of regional peacebuilding efforts.

In the MRU, for ex-combatants, this additionally provided fewer incentives to disarm, self-identify or dismantle chains of command. Further, the inattention to not just human security but political and economic marginalisation, as well as combatant and community notions of justice and reconciliation, particularly in vulnerable border areas, also meant that not only ex-combatants but other youth also became susceptible to (re)recruitment and other ‘anti-social’ activities that threaten long-term stability in the Mano River Union. The recent (and allegedly continuing) participation of ‘foreign’ combatants in cross-border violence means that regional combatants remain a potentially destabilising factor for the entire sub-region (and beyond), and respective countries and supporting peacebuilding institutions need to collaboratively build their capacities to, and develop viable models for, addressing regional combatants’ myriad concerns in post-conflict societies.

While this thesis focused on combatants, it further demonstrated the value of NRA to highlight the problematic of other aspects of state/non-state conflictual relationships. Even in this thesis, examples of inadequate responses by the state and the UN to cross-border challenges, beyond regional ex-combatants, are rife. They include summary closure of borders, curtailing necessary legitimate trade, and humanitarian organisations’ and national governments’ insistence on hosting mixed populations in refugee camps, rather than supporting their residence in host communities (which the majority preferred, or indeed separating out militias, as per international norms), losing opportunities to allow such populations to maintain self-reliance, enhance constructive cross-border relationships and consolidate confidence in their national governments.

As shown in Chapters 9 and 10, the failure to consider these regional imperatives through the lens of the historical and the social, as well as the economic and the

political, as advocated by NRA, necessarily limits the efficacy of responses. The policy implications of these findings are discussed in the next section. This is followed by some reflections on my methodological approaches in section 11.3. The chapter, and indeed the thesis, concludes with section 11.4.

11.2. Policy implications

My central research question was fundamentally a policy question. This section thus focuses on the resulting policy implications.

11.2.1. Regional conflicts require regional peacebuilding solutions

Current notions of peacebuilding seldom consider cross-border recruitment and disincentives for disarmament because of opportunities to participate in conflicts elsewhere. Whilst the peace-making solutions are increasingly international (for instance the respective peace operations in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire), the operations themselves are essentially country-bound, with little consideration given to the regional dynamics of conflict (although these are well documented), or the potential of existing regional conflict-mechanisms, except in a crisis.

There are signs that peacebuilding is evolving to take steps in this direction. Resolution 2282 (2016) on the review of UN peacebuilding architecture reiterated the importance of UN cooperation with regional and sub-regional organisations, as well as non-state actors for preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict (in line with Chapter VIII of the UN Charter) and underlined that

the scale and nature of the challenge of sustaining peace can be met through close strategic and operational partnerships between national governments, the United Nations, and other key stakeholders, including international, regional and sub-regional organizations, international financial institutions, regional and other development banks, civil society organizations, women's groups, youth organizations and where relevant, the private sector. (United Nations Security Council 2016a: 6)

In order to achieve these outcomes, the resolution called on the Peacebuilding Commission, an intergovernmental advisory body, to coordinate actions, further encouraging it to 'enhance its efficiency and flexibility' (p4) by, among others, 'enabling it to consider regional and cross-cutting issues relevant to sustaining peace'.

Further still, it stressed ‘the importance of partnership and cooperation between the United Nations and relevant regional and sub-regional organizations, including the African Union, to improve cooperation and coordination in peacebuilding, to increase synergies and ensure the coherence and complementarity of such efforts’ (ibid.).

These are very welcome developments; as Chapter 9 demonstrated, however, a real question is whether sub-regional organisations have the capacity or resources to meaningfully get involved. Accordingly, such pronouncements need to be coupled with a commitment to providing resources as well as sustained support for capacity and institutional development. Further, collaboration and engagement cannot remain at inter-governmental level – a key argument of this thesis is that peacebuilding too often understands regionalism as a top-down institutional process, whereas it is just as critical (if not more so) to engage from the bottom-up those (positive and negative and ambivalent) regionalisation processes which leave their mark on institutional processes.

The thesis has examined one such process – regional ex-combatants – but has highlighted the difficulties they face in being comprehensively engaged. The next section elaborates on the implications of this, with some suggestions for mitigation.

11.2.2. Ex-combatants in a post-conflict world

Resolution 2282 also emphasised the need to ‘support the participation of women and youth in peacebuilding processes’ (ibid.: 8). While commendable, calling for the participation of youth groups needs to be nuanced, to ensure that it is not just mainstream youth who are called on to participate in peacebuilding projects. Marginalised or ‘at-risk’ youth, such as former combatants, must also be factored in, which may prove difficult if, as previous chapters demonstrate, their motivations remain poorly understood. Veit (2010) in his analysis of conflict in Ituri (Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC), details how former fighters tried to engage peacefully in post-conflict interventions as part of civil society, but failed to be included. As he notes, ‘Without guns... demobilized combatants lacked resources in their relationship with other actors’ (2010: 164). Veit concludes that agencies relied on ‘a limited range of local interlocutors’ (ibid.: 168), including the national demobilisation commission.

Yet in Liberia the corresponding institution (NCDDRR) was decommissioned soon after the official end of the DDR programme (see next sub-section) while, similar to the case in the DRC, 'local NGOs with better reputations, established connections, and experience in project proposal writing ... monopolized the narrow market of internationally financed activities' (ibid.).

A final comment in this sub-section relates to addressing the 'root causes' of conflict. In Chapter 8 it was noted that time and again the UN Security Council called on Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire to address the root causes of regional conflict, with support from the UN. It must be noted that dealing with 'root causes' is not a panacea, however, as the changing motivations discussed in Chapter 6 demonstrate that factors that initially led to the eruption of violence may not be the same as those that perpetuate a particular conflict, or for that matter cause it to recur. As Sriram and Nielsen (2004) note

It is not enough for preventive or peacemaking actors to respond to the original 'causes' once a conflict has begun, since conflicts develop their own logics and dynamics . . . Also, the very existence and dynamics of conflict change the economic, political, military, and social structure of a country, and preventive actors must be prepared to address not only what they identify as the original causes of conflict, but also the demands that fuelled the conflict and the grievances that endure long after peace has been formally reached. (2004: 6)

Resolution 2282 further underlined the importance of inclusivity, ensuring that the needs of all segments of society are taken into account, and the need for 'an integrated, strategic and coherent approach to peacebuilding, noting that security, development and human rights are closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing' (p4). I would also argue that this requires serious efforts to promote national (and regional) reconciliation efforts, as well as to promote a justice that is seen as legitimate, including across borders, where mutual perceptions of 'being hard done by' are able to reinforce one another beyond national boundaries.

11.2.3. A note on DDR

One important area that regional peacebuilders need to 'get right' is during DDR which, as noted above, is one of the few times post-conflict that combatants are a dedicated focus of attention. Alden et al. (2011: 2) observe that 'it becomes clearer that the efficacy of DDR is not only dependent on a thorough empirical analysis of the

militias involved, but must also interface with a wide range of social, political and economic processes within which these armed actors are embedded. Understanding the nature, motivations and conduct of militias is crucial to devising a strategic approach to demilitarizing these entities and, concurrently, creating the conditions for long-term stability.’ They further note that ‘[r]ecognizing these contextual realities and integrating them into the substance of a DDR programme in a given post-conflict environment enhances the possibilities for the successful development of proactive strategies for demilitarization’ (Alden et al. 2011: 2–3).

UN DDR programmes are trying respond to the various constraints highlighted in Chapters 2 and 6, recognising particularly that the reintegration phase is core to long-term success. Although development partners and the government’s socio-economic policies are key in this regard, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) is increasingly including aspects of this phase, including psycho-social and socio-economic support, within in UN peace operations’ assessed budgets, as well as mobilising voluntary funding and national capacity, especially as UNDP, which provided core support, has scaled down its activities in this area.⁶⁹ While a positive development, as Chapter 9 demonstrated, such initiatives require both a correspondingly supportive mandate and appropriately skilled staff. Further, in the context of regional conflict, this will also require appropriate ‘region-wide targeted programmes,’ aimed at combatants, supported by ‘interlocking domestic and regional agreements’ (Pugh et al. 2004: 130).

Lastly, as noted in the previous section, often the end of official DDR programming is accompanied by a loss in status for ex-combatants. In fact, in Liberia, along with the dismantling of NCDDRR which, as noted in previous chapters, resulted in the significant loss of institutional memory, this period corresponded with the Liberian Government declaring that former fighters should no longer be referred to as ‘ex-combatants’ but rather as vulnerable youth. While a commendable attempt to regularise their post-conflict status, this move robbed ex-combatants of a defined lobbying identity, which further contributed to their marginalisation, and likely contributed to regional

⁶⁹ Interview with UN DDR Section in New York, 6 February 2015.

peacebuilders' failure to continue to comprehensively engage regional ex-combatants, especially as the post-DDR period progressed. DDR policymakers must take these aspects into consideration when designing programmes, especially those that have a cross-border dimension.

Before concluding this chapter, the next section highlights some further, methodological, contributions for the reader's consideration.

11.3. Methodological and conceptual contributions to the 'regional peace' research agenda

11.3.1. A matter of scale

It is difficult and in fact inadvisable in a PhD research project to maintain a broad research focus. We are advised time and again to narrow down our topic. As such, I was extremely nervous taking on this project as I conceptualised it, that is, with a focus on both combatants and peacekeepers. I worried excessively about whether the broadness of the research would water down the analysis. It is up to the reader to determine the extent to which this might have been the case but I would argue that this topic benefited tremendously from this focus. The central research question was concerned with the effectiveness of regional peace operations in relation to the perspectives of the peacekept; in order to answer that question I felt it imperative to demonstrate that as regional ex-combatants and regional peacebuilders are mutually constituting securitising agents and threats (as per Wendt 1987), it was important to provide the reader with a comprehensive understanding of both groups. Accordingly, I would argue that a methodological contribution of this thesis is the opening up of the peace research agenda, and elaborating on the idea that it is highly appropriate, and in fact imperative, to consider the peacekept in relation to the peacekeeper/peacebuilder and vice versa. Future research agendas along these lines might include broadening the spectrum of the peacekept, for instance, an investigation of regional conflict entrepreneurs' and elites' motivations (beyond narrow political economy considerations).

11.3.2. In between national surveys and deep hanging out

Chapters 2 and 5 touched on research methodologies typically used to investigate combatant motivations. These are mostly either in the form of large-scale quantitative surveys (e.g. Humphreys and Weinstein 2004) or ethnographic, highly personalised anthropological exercises (as with Hoffman 2011a). While the former is useful for gathering information from a large pool of respondents, it produces limited nuanced information; conversely, the latter can result in an excessive focus on the individual experience, without contextualising their experience within group and community dynamics. This relates to Stewart's (2002) argument relating to horizontal inequalities, wherein she argues that policies that simply address deprived individuals may fail, unless accompanied by policies directed towards group inequalities. While my resulting approach (structured in-depth questionnaire) was arrived at somewhat by expediency rather than design, I found that it was able to at least partially overcome both of these limitations. It did not provide generalisable data typical of survey-style studies but it did uncover a depth of detail that enabled necessary attention to the narrative, or back story, informing these stated motivations – albeit nowhere near as detailed as with ethnographic study. At the same time, in capturing similar information as the survey method it provided a broader picture of regional combatants and enabled them to be situated within wider, more structured studies, enhanced by focus group discussions.

11.3.3. Everyday peacebuilding above and below

Increasingly, studies of peace operations have turned their attention to employing a micro-level perspective beyond the peacekept to the peacekeepers and peacebuilders. I was extremely fortunate to be in a position to apply an institutional ethnography approach to UN peace operations, and while this may not be possible for every researcher, I would advocate for this research agenda to be more actively pursued. Here also, I was compelled to broaden the focus; I sought not just to take one end of the peace operations spectrum over another (e.g. powerful decision-making processes at Security Council level versus international peacebuilders on the ground in field offices), but to highlight the connection between them, which I believe was critical to tease out the nuances between the interactions that reinforce constrained practices.

11.3.4. A constructivist approach to international relations

Social constructivism in IR has moved in recent years from being one among a number of critical IR theories to one that provides a meaningfully alternative theoretical perspective on power, and the roles and relationships between states, non-state, regional and supra-state actors (see for instance its increased focus from Jackson and Sørensen 2003 to Jackson and Sørensen 2006). The application of social constructivism in this context emphasised notions of regional peace and security as socially constructed through interactions between the various levels of actors. It also enabled a focus on discourse – and the extent to which the discourses of securitising agents do or do not speak to one another. It further permitted an investigation of the social construction of such terms as ‘combatant’, ‘ex-combatant’ and ‘mercenary’ as well as of the respondent terms ‘peacebuilding’, ‘stabilisation’ and ‘security’, and to speak of these as speech acts, which provides new analytical imperatives. For instance, as discussed above, the literature on regional motivations demonstrates that regional ex-combatants have come to be synonymous with the term ‘mercenaries’, which has influenced how regional security has been approached by national, regional and international peacebuilding actors. Understanding motivations as speech acts helps us to investigate how mutual misunderstanding of the strategic deployment of peace, conflict and security discourses, by ex-combatants and peacebuilders alike, limit the effectiveness of regional security efforts.

A constructivist approach further lends itself to a multidisciplinary approach. For this thesis, applying political anthropology perspectives to the regional conflict literature, particularly in relation to the concepts of regionalism and micro-regions, has been invaluable.

11.4. *Concluding thoughts*

This chapter has discussed the above findings and lessons from this thesis in the context of my regional peace and security framework, research questions and propositions. It highlights that the mobility of armed combatants in and out of West African countries also has an impact on the politics of borders, on regionalism and

ultimately on regional peace and security. Accordingly, this should have an impact on peacebuilding approaches in regions of recent conflict and encourage an approach that focuses on fighters as active agents, inasmuch as their choices are being mediated by opportunities or lack thereof presented by regional peace processes.

The dichotomy between transnationalising tendencies (or regionalisation from below) and peacebuilding from above needs to be bridged by a better institutional understanding of how to mitigate the negative activities by regional combatants and similar groups, while acknowledging and promoting the opportunities their actions might also bring about. The current configuration of peacebuilding approaches has not resulted in the successful reintegration of a highly mobile population, determined to take advantage of strong informal cross-border links to improve their prospects, and if it remains as it is, is unlikely to improve the prospects for long-term peace.

Although this is slowly changing, the logic underpinning international peacebuilding responses to regional conflict remains limited. The dangers associated with this limitation were clearly evidenced along the Liberian–Ivoirian border in the 2010 Ivoirian elections. This is not an isolated situation. Without claiming that findings from this study should be extrapolated to other cases, it must be acknowledged that activities of cross-border (or returning) combatants in countries of recent, current and potential conflicts continue to be a potentially destabilising factor for entire regions beyond the Mano River Union sub-region. Cases in point include Tuareg fighters returning from Libya to Mali; Lord’s Resistance Army and related conflicts that have affected northern Uganda, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo and Chad; Boko Haram fighters fighting in the border micro-regions straddling Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger; and al-Shabaab fighters operating in micro-region spanning the Kenya-Somalia border. Inasmuch as some of these examples are layered over by violent extremism perspectives, respective countries and the peace operations that support them need to collaboratively build their capacities to handle these conflicts from a regional perspective that is not limited to militarised or securitised responses. These considerations could also serve as future research agendas beyond this thesis. Whatever the other imperatives, applying a new

regionalisms approach to such studies, focusing on non-state and marginalised actors, in relation to peace and security actors and their practice, is likely to make a welcome analytical contribution.

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Annex 1: Cross-border movements

Table A1.1: Timeline of major movements for cross-border conflict in the MRU

Date	From	To	Numbers*	Who	Context
1989	Côte d'Ivoire	Liberia	Hundreds	Sierra Leoneans, Guineans, Liberians, Burkinabé	Start of conflict in Liberia
1991	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Hundreds	Liberians, Burkinabé, Guineans, Sierra Leoneans	Start of conflict in Sierra Leone
1990+	Sierra Leone, Guinea	Liberia	Hundreds	Liberians, Sierra Leoneans	ULIMO counter-attack of NPFL
1998	Sierra Leone	Liberia	Hundreds	Sierra Leoneans, Liberians	AFRC-RUF junta repelled by ECOMOG
1998/9	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Hundreds?	Sierra Leoneans, Liberians	January 6 1999 invasion of Freetown with support from Charles Taylor
1999	Sierra Leone	Liberia	Thousands	Sierra Leoneans, Liberians	RUF repelled from Freetown
1999	Guinea	Liberia	Thousands	Sierra Leoneans, Guineans, Liberians	Launch of LURD attack on Charles Taylor regime
2000-2001	Sierra Leone	Liberia	Thousands	Sierra Leoneans, Liberians	RUF defeat, end of Sierra Leone conflict, resumption of conflict in Liberia
2001	Côte d'Ivoire	Liberia	Hundreds	Ivoirians, Liberians	Launch of MODEL attack on Charles Taylor's regime
2002+	Liberia	Côte d'Ivoire	Thousands	Liberians, Sierra Leoneans	Start of Ivoirian civil conflict
2008/9	Liberia/ Sierra Leone	Guinea	Hundreds	Liberians, Sierra Leoneans	Political crisis
2010+**	Liberia	Côte d'Ivoire	Thousands	Liberians, Ivoirians	Post-electoral crisis

* Actual figures not available. Based on estimates from various sources, including International Crisis Group (2002, 2003a, 2003b); Human Rights Watch (2005); and Group of Experts for Côte d'Ivoire (2011a).

**incidents after the 2010/11 electoral crisis elaborated on further in Table A1.2

Table A1.2: Timeline of cross-border attacks from Liberia following the Ivoirian electoral crisis

Date	Place	Attackers	Fatalities	Additional impacts / Source
11 May 2011	Blan gold-mining camp across border	14 Liberians (POE, Nov 2011)	8 civilians	Suspects detained in Liberia by Liberia National Police
15-16 Sept 2011	FRCI checkpoint and inhabitants of Ziriglo and Nigre	15–17 Ivoirians and Liberians	18 people	POE, June 2012
21 Feb 2012	Konankro camp, near Ziriglo and Tai Forest, near border with Liberia (Ernestkro)	'Mercenaries' (GoE, April 2012)	5	POE, June 2012
24 April 2012	Sakré, approximately 25 km south of Tai, Côte d'Ivoire	Approx. 20 Liberians and Ivoirians (POE June 2012)	7 civilians, 2 injured	3,000 displaced fifth attack in 10 months
8 June 2012	Civilians and FRCI and UNOCI patrols in Sao and Para	Liberian mercenaries and Ivoirian militia members	FRCI + 7 UN peacekeepers killed	Q4 meeting held in July 2012; GoL initiated Operation Restore Hope; Liberian Government arrested and subsequently charges...
13 Aug 2012	Ivoirian border checkpoint and FRCI barracks at Péhékanhouébli, approx. 1 km from Liberia B'hai border post	'17 Ivoirian militias and 2 Liberian mercenaries'	--	POE, Dec 2012
13 March 2013	Zileby village, near Liberian border	Unidentified armed men	7 persons	See next entry
March 2013	20th: attempted attack in Tiobly, resulting in several injuries 23rd: attack in Petit Guiglo;	Ivoirian combatants residing in refugee camps in Liberia	3 assailants, 1 civilian and 2 FRCI elements were killed, while the entire village was set ablaze.	Extensive internal displacement (about 7,000 persons) Arrests of Ivoirians in Liberia Q4 meeting in April 2013;
23 Feb 2014	Fété, near Grabo, 9 km from Liberian border village in River Gee	Unknown, presumed mix of Liberians and Ivoirians	?	Displacement into Liberia (number of inhabitants reduced from 2600 individuals to 98 families)
14–15 May 2014	Fété (Grabo) as above	French and English-speaking attackers, targeting FRCI	3 FRCI soldiers MIA; 5 civilians, all of Burkinabe origin killed	Extensive displacement into Liberia; Ivoirian govt requested suspension of voluntary repatriation and

				reiterated request to relocate camps away from border
Jan, Feb, March 2015	Various locations in close proximity to Liberian border	Ivoirians (but alleged cross-border dimension)	2 FRCI members (Jan attack), significant internal displacement	Q4 meeting in March 2015
2 Dec 2015*	Two FRCI camps in Olodio, 15–20 km from Liberian border	Ivoirians	--	Displacement of 10 Ivoirian families into Liberia.
29 March 2016*	FRCI position in Nero village	FRCI-community clash	--	1 FRCI soldier injured

Sources: UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 2013; Panel of Experts on Liberia, 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2013a, 2013b; UNMIL and UNOCI reporting

* No cross-border component confirmed but alleged by some Ivoirian authorities.

Annex 2: Overview of interviews and focus group discussions

Table A2.1: Summary of formal and semi-formal interviews conducted

UN, international and non-governmental organisations		
Interviewee	Location	Date
UNMIL Civil Affairs Officer	Monrovia	March 2010
Conservation International	Monrovia	March 2010
UNDP Officer	Monrovia	March 2010
Landmine Action Senior Officer	Monrovia	March 2010
UNMIL Joint Mission Analysis Centre (JMAC) Officer	Monrovia	March 2010
UNMIL Senior JMAC Officer	Monrovia	March 2010
UNMIL Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Recovery (RRR) Officer	Monrovia	March 2010 March 2012
UNMIL RRR Officer	Monrovia	March 2010
UNMIL Senior RRR Officer	Monrovia	March 2010
UNDP Community Security and Social Cohesion	Monrovia	April 2010
Landmine Action Officer	Monrovia	April 2010
UNMIL RRR Officer	Zwedru, Grand Gedeh	May 2010 April 2013
Save My Future Foundation	Zwedru, Grand Gedeh	May 2010
Acelor Mittal	Yekepa, Nimba	May 2010
SGS	Monrovia	May 2010
UNMIL Civil Affairs Expert	Monrovia	July 2010
Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA)	Monrovia	June 2010
Sierra Leone Embassy Official	Monrovia	March 2012
German Agro Action	Monrovia	July 2013
Mano River Union	Monrovia Freetown Abidjan	Oct 2013 Dec 2013 April 2014
UN DPA Official	New York	January 2015
UN DPKO DDR	New York	February 2015
UN DPKO DDR	New York	February 2015
UN DPKO DDR	New York	February 2015
Danish Refugee Council	Monrovia	July 2015
Côte d'Ivoire Embassy Official	Monrovia	November 2015
UNMIL Officer	Monrovia	March 2016
ECOWAS official	Monrovia	September 2016
Liberia Government and agencies		
Interviewee	Location	Date
Forestry Development Authority	Monrovia	March 2010
Liberia National Commission on Small Arms (LiNCSA)	Monrovia	March 2010
Ministry of Lands Mines and Energy (Administration)	Monrovia	April 2010
Ministry of Lands Mines and Energy (Kimberly Process)	Monrovia	April 2010
Ministry of Lands Mines and Energy (Diamond Office)	Monrovia	April 2010
Senior Official, Ministry of Labour	Monrovia	May 2010

Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization (BIN) Officer	Yekepa	May 2010
Liberia National Police (LNP) Officer	Henry Town, Gbarpolu	May 2010
Senior Official, Liberia Refugees Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC)	Monrovia	March 2012
LRRRC Field Officer	Sinje	March 2012
LNP Officer	Sinje	March 2012
Border Security Officials	Bo Waterside	April 2012 March 2013
Ministry of Internal Affairs Official	Monrovia	Sept 2013
Ministry of Youth and Sports Official	Monrovia	Feb 2014
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Monrovia	March 2016
Other key informant interviews		
Interviewee	Location	Date
Former Sierra Leonean Refugee / ex-combatant	VOA, Careysburg, Montserrado	April 2012
Former Sierra Leonean Refugee	VOA, Careysburg, Montserrado	April 2012
Former Sierra Leonean Refugee	VOA, Careysburg, Montserrado	April 2012
Informal discussion with former refugees	VOA, Careysburg, Montserrado	April 2012
Informal discussion with former refugees	Tiene, Grand Cape Mount	April 2012
Informal discussion with former refugees	Sinje, Grand Cape Mount	April 2012
Ivoirian refugees residing in communities	Near Ganta, Nimba	Nov 2012

Table A2.2: Interviews and focus group discussions on combatant motivations

Ex-combatant interviews		
Number	Location	Date
2	ELWA Junction, Monrovia	March 2012
1	Bo Waterside (Liberian-Sierra Leonean border)	April 2012
20	West Point, Monrovia	April-August 2013
5	Clara Town, Monrovia	May 2013
25	Zwedru and environs, Grand Gedeh	Aug 2013 – March 2014
Focus group discussions		
Group	Location	Date
Ex-combatant/mining youth	Henry Town, Gbarpolu County	May 2010
Ex-combatant/former refugees	VOA settlement, Careysburg, Montserrado	March 2012
Ex-combatant/community youth	ELWA Junction, Monrovia	March 2012
Ex-combatant/'refugees'	Grand Gedeh	April 2013
Ex-combatant/community youth	West Point, Monrovia	21 April 2013
Ex-combatant only	Clara Town, Monrovia	May 2013

Table A2.3: Key participant observation opportunities

Event/activity	Place	Date
Informal discussion – community youth	Yekepa, Nimba County, Liberia	5 May 2010
Interviews – community leaders	Yekepa	May 2010
Interviews – plantation workers	Cocopa Rubber Plantation, Nimba County	May 2010
(Former) Refugee communities and camps: formal and informal interviews; informal group discussions	VOA former refugee settlement Sinje and Tiene, Grand Cape Mount Nimba (Communities) Grand Gedeh (PTP & Solo) Maryland (Little Wlebo)	February 2012 April 2012 November 2012 April 2013 Nov 2013, February 2016
Border mining community visits	Henry Town, Gbarpolu County Bartel Jam, Grand Gedeh County	May 2010 April 2013
MRU meetings	Civil Society meeting, Freetown Border strategy implementation workshop, Abidjan Peace & Security meeting, Abidjan/Grand Bassam, CI JBSCBU reactivation meeting, Monrovia	December 2013 April 2014 May 2016 June 2016
Joint Council of Chiefs and Elders Meetings	Zwedru, Grand Gedeh Guiglo, Côte d'Ivoire	October 2013 January 2016
Op MAYO meeting	Pekan Barrage, Maryland/Côte d'Ivoire border	November 2013
Joint Border Security and Confidence Building Unit meeting	Bo Waterside	May 2016
Border county security council meetings	Harper, Maryland Zwedru, Grand Gedeh	November 2015 January 2016
Quadripartite meetings	Government-UN missions meeting Monrovia Forces Meeting, Grand Bassam, Cote d'Ivoire	April 2013 March 2016

Annex 3: Ex-combatant in-depth questionnaire

Section 1: Background

1. Age or year of birth?
2. Sex?
3. Place of birth (Village or Town, County/District, Country)?
4. Tribe/ethnic group?
5. Languages spoken
6. Religion
7. Marital/co-habitation status? Where is partner from?
8. Level of education completed?
9. Occupation before the war?
10. Present occupation
11. Level of daily/monthly income
12. Children/number of dependents?
13. Where were you living before the war started?
14. Do you have brothers and sisters? Still alive? Where? When last seen?
15. Parents: are they alive? Where are/were they from? What was their occupation before the war? When last seen?
16. Were you ever displaced or a refugee before you joined?

Section 2: First experience of fighting

17. Where were you based when you were first recruited to fight?
18. Which faction were you recruited into? When (year)?
19. [Had you left school by then?]
20. How/why did you become involved with this group?
21. Did you think you would gain anything from participating? If so, what?
22. What role did you play/what rank were you?
23. Did you fight for any other faction(s) in this country?
24. If so, why did you change faction(s)?
25. When the war (in Liberia/Sierra Leone/[Côte d'Ivoire]) ended, where were you based?
26. In your opinion who won this war?

Section 2: Experience of war abroad

27. Who recruited you to fight abroad? When was this?
28. What were your main reasons for going across the border to fight?
29. Were you told anything about what you would gain for participating?
30. Who did you go with? Did you know them from before?
31. How many other people [from your country] were also fighting?
32. Where did you go (region/district)? Which group were you associated with?
33. What were your main activities? What rank/position were you?
34. What were you doing prior to your re-recruitment? Where?
35. Did you go through the DDR programme prior to this?
36. Why did you come back/stop fighting?

37. When was the last time you had contact with the person who recruited you?
38. Since you have been back has anyone approached you for recruitment to fight anywhere?
39. What have you been doing to earn money since you came back? How many people do you support?
40. If someone was to try and recruit you now would you accept? Why/why not?

Section 4: Experience of DDR

41. Did you participate in the DDR programme? If not, why not?
42. If so, where and when did you disarm? How?
43. Did you participate in/complete a reintegration programme? If not, why not? (Did you complete?)
44. If so, which programme?
45. What did you think about it?
46. Did you find related job afterward? If not, why not?
47. How do you think most of your fellow ex-combatants are surviving?

Section 5: Social networks and home or away preferences

48. With whom do you spend most of your free time?
49. Who do you live with?
50. Have you been back to home country/fighting country [as relevant] since you stopped fighting there?
51. Have you been in touch with anybody from there? Why or why not?
52. If you had the choice, which of the countries you have been in would you most like to live and why?



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Study title

Regionalism and Peacebuilding in West Africa

Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of this study is to investigate ex-combatants' motivations for crossing borders to fight in West Africa, and the settlement choices they made after the wars they were fighting in ended. It will also reflect on whether their choices are an example of informal regionalism that ECOWAS and peacebuilders could learn from. The study is part of my DPhil Research.

Why have I been invited to participate?

As a concerned citizen / former combatant / border official / policymaker, you have been invited to participate because I believe you will provide significant insights into the aspects I am studying.

Do I have to take part?

You can decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason'.

What will happen to me if I take part?

I will be asking you questions and recording our conversation. The interview will then be transcribed and made anonymous so that it won't be possible to trace what you have said to me.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part? (where appropriate)

The main disadvantage is that I will be taking up your time.

I will not be asking you specifically about your experiences during the war but some of the things we talk about may make you remember difficult events that may affect you emotionally or disturb your peace of mind. If this should happen, and you feel that you need some help to deal with these issues, I can provide you with the details for/link you up with YMCA Liberia, which offers psycho-social support to ex-combatants.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The main benefit is that you will be contributing to a study that hopes to further understanding of how formal and informal regionalisation processes influence and should affect one another. It also hopes to contribute to policymakers' understanding of promoting regional stability. OR (for ex-combatants): you will be contributing to enabling others to get a better understanding of what life for you is like today, 10 years after the end of the war in Liberia.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

All information collected will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations). Confidentiality, privacy and anonymity will be ensured in the following ways: questionnaires and interview transcripts will only be identifiable by a unique identifier; I shall use pseudonyms if I am quoting directly anything that is said, and the pseudonyms will be stored entirely separately from the research data.

What should I do if I want to take part?

Just let me know!

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the research study will be used to write up my PhD thesis.

Who is organising and funding the research?

I am conducting the research as a student at University of Sussex, Institute of Development Studies. I am self-funded.

Who has reviewed the study?

The research has been approved by a Social Sciences Cluster-based Research Ethics Committee (C-REC)

Contact for Further Information

Supervisor: Dr Patricia Justino, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton BN1 9RE, p.justino@ids.ac.uk; Tel: +44 (0)1273 915752

If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, you should contact my supervisor, using the above details.

Thank you

Thank you for taking time to read the information sheet.

Date:



PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

PROJECT TITLE:

Regionalism and Peacebuilding in West Africa

I agree to take part in the above University of Sussex research project. I have had the project explained to me and I have read and understood the Information Sheet, which I may keep for records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:

- Be interviewed by the researcher
- Allow the interview to be audiotaped
- Make myself available for a further interview should that be required

I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that I disclose will lead to the identification of any individual in the reports on the project, either by the researcher or by any other party.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

Name:

Signature

Date:

Annex 4: Ex-combatant profile tables

Table A4.1: Respondents' age groups

Born in	# Monrovia	#Grand Gedeh	Total
1960s	3	2	5
1970s	5	14	19
1980s	13	9	22
1990s	4	-	4
Total	25	25	50

Table A4.2: Liberian respondents by ethnicity

Ethnic Group	Number* (Montserrado)	Number* (Grand Gedeh)
Gola	3	2
Sapo	1	2
Mano	1	1
Kru	3	1
Krahn	2	21
Grebo	2	4
Gio	1	10
Gbandi	1	-
Lorma	-	4
Vai	-	2
Mandingo	-	3

Table A4.3: Sierra Leonean respondents by ethnicity

Ethnic Group	Number*
Mende	5
Temne	3
Kissi	2
Mandingo	1
Limba	1
Lebanese	1
Unknown	1

**More than total of interviewees as multiple ethnicities reported*

Table A4.4: Comparing Liberia original fighting faction with national data

Faction	Former fighting faction random sample (1998–2003)*		Sample totals	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
AFL	8	1.36	3	7.14
LPC	14	2.37	2	4.26
NPFL	150	25.42	19	45.02
Taylor's GoL-Militia/SBU	186	31.53	3	7.14
ULIMO	7	1.19	1	2.38
ULIMO-J	5	0.85	6	14.28
ULIMO-K	14	2.37	-	-
LDF	-	-	1	2.38
INPFL	4	0.68	4	9.52
MODEL	76	12.88	2	4.26
LURD	126	21.36	-	-
LUDF	-	-	1	2.38
Total	590	100	42	100

*Pugel 2007

Table A4.5: Comparing Sierra Leone original fighting faction with national data

Faction	NCDDR totals		Sample totals	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
SLA/AFRC	8869	12.1	1	10
RUF	24,338	33.1	6	60
Anti-RUF	37,216	50.6	2	20
Others	448	0.6	1 [ULIMO]	10
Total	70,871	100	10	100

Table A4.6: Subsequent fighting faction

	1990–1996	1999–2003	2002–2007 (CI)	2010–2012
Movement phase 1: NPFL support for RUF invasion of Sierra Leone; Sierra Leone and Guinea support creation of ULIMO against NPFL; ULIMO return to Liberia including Sierra Leoneans				
RUF	2			
LUDF/ULIMO	3			
NPFL	1			
Movement phase 2: RUF retreat to Liberia and support Charles Taylor against new insurgency by LURD and MODEL, supported by Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire respectively; Sierra Leoneans move to fight with LURD				
Charles Taylor Special Forces		15		
LURD		4		
MODEL		4		
Movement phase 3: Start of Ivoirian conflict – RUF, pro-Taylor and anti-Taylor militia involvement				
Movement for Justice and Peace (<i>Mouvement pour la justice et la paix</i> , MJP) – ‘rebels’			1	
Ivoirian Popular Movement of the Great West (<i>Mouvement populaire ivoirien du Grand Ouest</i> , MPIGO) – ‘rebels’			2	
Lima militia (pro-Gbagbo)			1	
Movement phase 4: Ivoirian electoral crisis (2010–2011) – armed conflict between pro-Ouattara and pro-Gbagbo militias, involving Liberians on both sides				
The Ivoirian Popular Front (<i>Front populaire ivoirien</i> , FPI) – pro-Gbagbo)			2	2
Pro-Gbagbo militias			4	5
Young Patriots – pro-Gbagbo				2
New Forces (<i>Forces Nouvelles</i> FNCI or FN) – ‘rebels’/ pro-Ouattara)			2	3
Armed Forces of the New Forces (<i>Forces Armées des Forces Nouvelles</i> , FAFN (pro-Ouattara)				1
Pro-Ouattara militias				1
Rally of the Republicans (<i>Rassemblement des Républicains</i> RDR) – Pro-Ouattara				1

Annex 5: Examples of common mandate language across missions and over time

Table A5.1: Similarities in mandate issues language across peacekeeping missions – example of the start-up phase of MRU Missions

Issue	S/Res 1270 (1999) establishing UNAMSIL	S/Res 1509 (2003) establishing UNMIL	Security Council 1528 (2004) establishing UNOCI
Decision	<p>8. Decides to establish the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) with immediate effect for an initial period of six months</p> <p>14. Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations . . .</p>	<p>Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations,</p> <p>1. Decides to establish the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the stabilization force called for . . . for a period of 12 months, and requests the Secretary-General to transfer authority from the ECOWAS-led ECOMIL forces to UNMIL on 1 October 2003 . . .</p>	<p>Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations,</p> <p>1. Decides to establish the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) for an initial period of 12 months as from 4 April 2004, and requests the Secretary-General to transfer authority from MINUCI and the ECOWAS forces to UNOCI on that date, and decides therefore to renew the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI) until 4 April 2004;</p>
Ceasefire agreement	<p>8(e) To monitor adherence to the ceasefire in accordance with the ceasefire agreement of 18 May 1999 . . . through the structures provided for therein;</p>	<p>3(a) to observe and monitor the implementation of the ceasefire agreement and investigate violations of the ceasefire;</p>	<p>6(a) To observe and monitor the implementation of the comprehensive ceasefire agreement of 3 May 2003, and investigate violations of the ceasefire</p>
DDR	<p>8 (b) To assist the Government of Sierra Leone in the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration plan;</p> <p>(c) To that end, to establish a presence at key locations throughout the territory of Sierra Leone, including at disarmament/reception centres and demobilization centres;</p>	<p>3 (f) to develop, as soon as possible, preferably within 30 days of the adoption of this resolution, in cooperation with the JMC, relevant international financial institutions, international development organizations, and donor nations, an action plan for the overall implementation of a disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, and repatriation (DDRR) programme for all armed parties; with particular attention to the special needs of child combatants and women; and addressing the inclusion of non-Liberian combatants;</p> <p>(g) to carry out voluntary disarmament and to collect and destroy weapons and ammunition</p>	<p>(d) To assist the Government of National Reconciliation in undertaking the regrouping of all the Ivoirian forces involved and to ensure the security of their cantonment sites,</p> <p>(e) To help the Government of National Reconciliation implement the national programme for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the combatants (DDR), with special attention to the specific needs of women and children,</p>

		as part of an organized DDDR programme;	
Protection of UN staff and civilians	<p>8 (d) To ensure the security and freedom of movement of United Nations personnel;</p> <p>13. Reiterates the importance of the safety, security and freedom of movement of United Nations and associated personnel . . . and calls upon all parties in Sierra Leone to respect fully the status of United Nations and associated personnel;</p> <p>14. Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, decides that in the discharge of its mandate UNAMSIL may take the necessary action to ensure the security and freedom of movement of its personnel and, within its capabilities and areas of deployment, to afford protection to civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, taking into account the responsibilities of the Government of Sierra Leone and ECOMOG;</p>	<p>Protection of United Nations Staff, Facilities and Civilians:</p> <p>(j) to protect United Nations personnel, facilities, installations and equipment, ensure the security and freedom of movement of its personnel and, without prejudice to the efforts of the government, to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, within its capabilities;</p>	<p>6. Protection of United Nations personnel, institutions and civilians</p> <p>(i) To protect United Nations personnel, installations and equipment, provide the security and freedom of movement of United Nations personnel and, without prejudice to the responsibility of the Government of National Reconciliation, to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, within its capabilities and its areas of deployment,</p>
Humanitarian and human rights	<p>8 (g) To facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance;</p> <p>17. Stresses the urgent need to promote peace and national reconciliation and to foster accountability and respect for human rights in Sierra Leone . . .</p> <p>19. Urges all parties concerned to ensure that refugees and internally displaced persons are protected and are enabled to return voluntarily and</p>	<p>3. Support for Humanitarian and Human Rights Assistance:</p> <p>(k) to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance, including by helping to establish the necessary security conditions;</p> <p>(l) to contribute towards international efforts to protect and promote human rights in Liberia, with particular attention to vulnerable groups including refugees, returning refugees and internally displaced persons, women, children, and demobilized child soldiers</p>	<p>6. (k) To facilitate the free flow of people, goods and humanitarian assistance, inter alia, by helping to establish the necessary security conditions,</p> <p>(n) To contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights in Côte d'Ivoire with special attention to violence committed against women and girls, and to help investigate human rights violations with a view to help ending impunity</p>

	in safety to their homes . . .		
Support for the implementation of the peace process (including elections)	8(i) (i) To provide support, as requested, to the elections, which are to be held in accordance with the present constitution of Sierra Leone;	(s) to assist the transitional government, in conjunction with ECOWAS and other international partners, in preparing for national elections scheduled for no later than the end of 2005;	(m) To provide oversight, guidance and technical assistance to the Government of National Reconciliation, with the assistance of ECOWAS and other international partners, to prepare for and assist in the conduct of free, fair and transparent electoral processes . . .
Security sector reform	23. Urges the Government of Sierra Leone to expedite the formation of professional and accountable national police and armed forces, including through their restructuring and training . . .	(n) . . . to assist the transitional government of Liberia in monitoring and restructuring the police force of Liberia, consistent with democratic policing, to develop a civilian police training programme, and to otherwise assist in the training of civilian police, in cooperation with ECOWAS, international organizations, and interested States; (o) . . . to assist the transitional government in the formation of a new and restructured Liberian military in cooperation with ECOWAS, international organizations and interested States;	(p) . . . To assist the Government of National Reconciliation in conjunction with ECOWAS and other international organizations in restoring a civilian policing presence throughout Côte d'Ivoire, and to advise the Government of National Reconciliation on the restructuring of the internal security services, (q) . . . To assist the Government of National Reconciliation in conjunction with ECOWAS and other international organizations in re-establishing the authority of the judiciary and the rule of law throughout Côte d'Ivoire,

Table A5.2: UNMIL (and UNOCI) mandate language relating to regional and inter-mission cooperation

S/Res	Bilateral cooperation	Inter-mission cooperation (military)	Inter-mission cooperation (civilian)	Humanitarian issues	Regional cooperation
2008 (2011)		6. <i>Reaffirms</i> the inter-mission cooperation arrangements provided for in 1609 (2005) as-needed and on a temporary basis, between UNMIL and UNOCI	7. <i>Further emphasizes</i> the need for UNMIL and UNOCI to regularly coordinate their strategies and operations in areas near the Liberian-Côte d'Ivoire border, in order to contribute to sub-regional security and to prevent armed groups from exploiting the seam of political boundaries	8. <i>Further emphasizes</i> the need for the donor community to support the Government of Liberia, as well as the United Nations, and other humanitarian actors, as appropriate, in their response to the current influx of Ivorian refugees;	12. <i>Encourages</i> ECOWAS to develop, with the support of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), a sub-regional strategy to address the threat of the cross-border movements of armed groups and weapons as well as illicit trafficking, with the assistance of UNMIL and UNOCI, as appropriate;
2062 (2012)	18. <i>Calls upon</i> the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia to continue to enhance their cooperation, particularly with respect to the border area, including through increasing monitoring, information sharing and conducting coordinated actions, and in developing and implementing a shared border strategy to inter alia support the disarmament and repatriation of foreign armed elements on both sides of the border and the repatriation of refugees;	21. Endorses, with immediate effect, the recommendation of the Secretary-General to transfer the three armed helicopters, currently deployed in UNMIL, to UNOCI, to be used in both Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia along and across their border;	19. <i>Calls upon</i> all United Nations bodies in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, including all components of UNOCI and UNMIL . . . to enhance their support for the stabilization of the border area, including through their increased cooperation and the development of a shared, strategic vision and plan, in support of the Ivorian and Liberian authorities;		20. Encourages ECOWAS and the Mano River Union to continue to develop, with the support of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), a subregional strategy to address the threat of the cross-border movements of armed groups and weapons as well as illicit trafficking, with the assistance of UNOCI and UNMIL, as appropriate, and provide regular updates on progress towards the development of such a subregional strategy

S/Res	Bilateral cooperation	Inter-mission cooperation (military)	Inter-mission cooperation (civilian)	Humanitarian issues	Regional cooperation
2066 (2012)	12. <i>Calls upon</i> the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia to continue to enhance their cooperation, particularly with respect to the border area, including through increasing monitoring, information sharing and conducting coordinated actions, and in developing and implementing a shared border strategy to inter alia support the disarmament and repatriation of foreign armed elements on both sides of the border and the voluntary return of refugees;	14. <i>Recalls</i> the endorsement, in its resolution 2062 (2012), of the Secretary-General's recommendation to transfer the three armed helicopters, currently deployed in UNMIL, to UNOCI, to be used in both Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia along and across their border;	13. <i>Reaffirms</i> the inter-mission cooperation arrangements provided for in its resolution 1609 (2005) and <i>calls upon</i> the United Nations in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, including all components of UNOCI and UNMIL, within their respective mandates, capabilities and areas of deployment, to enhance their inter-mission cooperation for the stabilization of the border area, including through the development of a shared, strategic vision and plan, in support of the Ivorian and Liberian authorities;	15. <i>Calls upon</i> the donor community to support the Government of Liberia, as well as the relevant United Nations agencies, and other humanitarian actors, as appropriate, in their response to the Ivorian refugees still present in Liberia;	19. <i>Encourages</i> ECOWAS and the Mano River Union to develop, with the support of UNOWA, a subregional strategy to address the threat of the cross-border movements of armed groups and weapons as well as illicit trafficking, with the assistance of UNOCI and UNMIL, as appropriate, and requests the Secretary-General to provide regular updates on progress towards the development of such a subregional strategy;
2116 (18 Sept 2013)	13. <i>Calls on</i> the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, including with the support of UNOCI and UNMIL and the two United Nations country teams, to	15. <i>Takes note of</i> the transfer of three armed helicopters from UNMIL to UNOCI, to be used in both Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, along and across their border, and the transfer of four	14. <i>Reaffirms</i> the inter-mission cooperation arrangements provided for in its resolutions 1609 (2005) and 2100 (2013) , consistent with the conditions outlined	16. <i>Calls upon</i> the donor community to continue to support the Government of Liberia, as well as the relevant United Nations agencies and other humanitarian actors, as	19. <i>Encourages</i> ECOWAS and the Mano River Union to develop, with the support of UNOWA, a subregional strategy to address the threat of the cross-border movements of

S/Res	Bilateral cooperation	Inter-mission cooperation (military)	Inter-mission cooperation (civilian)	Humanitarian issues	Regional cooperation
	further enhance their cooperation, particularly with respect to the border area, including through increasing monitoring, information sharing, and conducting coordinated actions, and in developing and implementing a shared border strategy to inter alia support the disarmament and repatriation of foreign armed elements on both sides of the border and the voluntary return of refugees in safety and dignity;	armoured personnel carriers and <i>affirms</i> the importance of inter-mission cooperation arrangements as UNMIL and UNOCI downsize;	therein, and <i>calls upon</i> the United Nations in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, including all components of UNOCI and UNMIL, within their respective mandates, capabilities and areas of deployment, to enhance their inter mission cooperation for the stabilization of the border area, including through the development of a shared, strategic vision and plan, in support of the Ivorian and Liberian authorities;	appropriate, in their response to the Ivorian refugees still present in Liberia;	armed groups and weapons as well as illicit trafficking, with the assistance of UNOCI and UNMIL, as appropriate, and <i>requests</i> the Secretary-General to provide regular updates on progress towards the development of such a subregional strategy;
2190 (15 Dec 2014)	18. <i>Recognizes</i> that the Ebola outbreak has put on hold the joint activities between the Governments of Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, as well as between UNMIL and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), <i>calls on</i> these governments to continue reinforcing their cooperation, particularly with respect to the border	19. <i>Affirms</i> the importance of inter-mission cooperation arrangements as UNMIL and UNOCI downsize, <i>reaffirms</i> the inter-mission cooperation framework set out in its resolution 1609 (2005), <i>recalls</i> its endorsement in its resolution 2062 (2012) of the recommendation of the Secretary-General to transfer three armed helicopters from UNMIL to UNOCI to be used in	18 (contd.) <i>calls upon</i> all United Nations entities in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, including all relevant components of UNOCI and UNMIL, within their respective mandates, capabilities and areas of deployment, as well as the two United Nations Country Teams, where relevant and appropriate, to support the Ivorian		

S/Res	Bilateral cooperation	Inter-mission cooperation (military)	Inter-mission cooperation (civilian)	Humanitarian issues	Regional cooperation
	area, including through increased monitoring, information sharing, and coordinated actions, and in implementing the shared border strategy to, inter alia, support the disarmament and repatriation of armed elements on both sides of the border and the voluntary return of refugees in safety and dignity, as well as to address the root causes of conflict and tension	both Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia along and across their border and <i>also recalls</i> its decision in its resolution 2162 (2014) that all UNOCI and UNMIL military utility helicopters shall be utilized in both Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia in order to facilitate rapid response and mobility, while not affecting the area of responsibility of either mission; 20. <i>Recalls</i> the proposal by the Secretary-General as set out in his report of 15 May 2014 (S/2014/342), to establish, in the context of inter-mission cooperation arrangements between UNMIL and UNOCI, for an initial period of one year and within the authorized military strength of UNOCI, a quick reaction force to implement UNOCI's mandate and to support UNMIL, while reiterating that this unit will remain primarily a UNOCI asset;	and Liberian authorities;		
	19. <i>Recognizes</i> the importance of resuming fully and also enhancing the	20. <i>Affirms</i> the importance of inter-mission cooperation arrangements as UNMIL and	19 (contd.) <i>calls upon</i> all United Nations entities in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia,		

S/Res	Bilateral cooperation	Inter-mission cooperation (military)	Inter-mission cooperation (civilian)	Humanitarian issues	Regional cooperation
	<p>joint activities between the Governments of Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire as UNMIL and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) downsize, <i>calls on</i> the Governments of Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire to continue reinforcing their cooperation, particularly with respect to the border area, including through increased monitoring, information sharing, and coordinated actions, and in implementing the shared border strategy to, inter alia, support the disarmament and repatriation of armed elements on both sides of the border and the voluntary return of refugees in safety and dignity, as well as to address the root causes of conflict and tension</p>	<p>UNOCI downsize, <i>reaffirms</i> the inter-mission cooperation framework set out in its resolution 1609 (2005), <i>recalls</i> its endorsement in its resolution 2062 (2012) of the recommendation of the Secretary-General to transfer three armed helicopters from UNMIL to UNOCI to be used in both Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia along and across their border and <i>also recalls</i> its decision in its resolution 2162 (2014) that all UNOCI and UNMIL military utility helicopters shall be utilized in both Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia in order to facilitate rapid response and mobility, while not affecting the area of responsibility of either mission; 21. <i>Welcomes</i> the full operationalization of the quick reaction force established by its resolution 2162 (2014) to implement UNOCI's mandate as defined in paragraph 19 of its resolution 2226 (2015) and to support UNMIL as defined in paragraph 33 of its</p>	<p>including all relevant components of UNOCI and UNMIL, within their respective mandates, capabilities and areas of deployment, as well as the two United Nations Country Teams, where relevant and appropriate, to intensify support to the Ivorian and Liberian authorities;</p>		

S/Res	Bilateral cooperation	Inter-mission cooperation (military)	Inter-mission cooperation (civilian)	Humanitarian issues	Regional cooperation
		<p>resolution 2226 (2015) while recognizing that this unit will remain primarily a UNOCI asset;</p> <p>22. <i>Recalls</i> its authorization, pursuant to its resolutions 2162 (2014) and 2226 (2015), to the Secretary-General to deploy this unit to Liberia, subject to the consent of the troop contributing countries concerned and the Government of Liberia, in the event of a serious deterioration of the security situation on the ground in order to temporarily reinforce UNMIL with the sole purpose of implementing its mandate and <i>further recalls</i> its requests to the Secretary-General to inform the Security Council immediately of any deployment of this unit to Liberia and to obtain Security Council authorization for any such deployment for a period that exceeds 90 days;</p>			